

# JESUS AS HE WAS AND IS

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✠ SAMUEL G. CRAIG ✠

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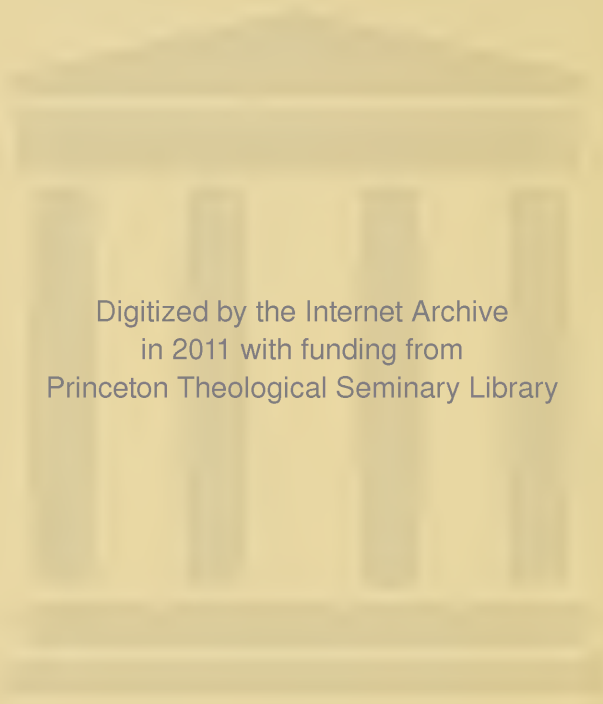
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SAMUEL G. CRAIG

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A MODERN ATTEMPT TO SET FORTH THE  
ABIDING SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS CHRIST

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✓ BY  
**SAMUEL G. CRAIG, A.M., B.D.**

MINISTER OF THE NORTH PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF PITTSBURGH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
✓  
**PROF. BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD, D.D., LL.D.**  
OF PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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TO

C. H. C.



## PREFACE

**I**T is clear to the author of this book—and widely admitted to-day even by the most radical critics—that the writers of the New Testament are essentially one in their conception of Jesus. Moreover, he is firmly convinced that the Jesus of the New Testament is the primitive Jesus—as is evidenced by this book as a whole, particularly the second chapter. Those who are interested in the critical questions that are raised by those who attempt to get back of the Jesus of the New Testament to a more primitive Jesus are referred to such books as “Jesus and the Gospel,” by James Denny, and “The Lord of Glory,” by B. B. Warfield.

The title of this book, therefore, indicates that it is written from the standpoint of those who believe (1) that the Jesus of the New Testament actually existed, (2) that He exists to-day as One in whom the virtues of His earthly life are perpetuated. The final chapter makes clear, moreover, that its author is in harmony with those who believe that the great event that

awaits us in the future is the personal return of this same Lord Jesus.

In characterizing this as a modern attempt to set forth the abiding significance of Jesus Christ, the author does not mean to profess any special sympathy with what is called Modernism in so far as it places a minimizing interpretation on the person and work of Jesus. What he means is that it is not written without some knowledge of modern tendencies and that he does not hesitate to call himself a modern because in his interpretation of Jesus and His work he is in essential harmony with the Church of all ages, including the Church as it exists to-day in all its great branches. Rather this latter fact strengthens him in his conviction that he is living in the main current of existence since he is persuaded that in Jesus alone is to be found the dynamic through which the best aspirations of our age may be realized and hence that those who march in the vanguard of progress are ever those who march under the command of Jesus Christ. No doubt there have been and are reactionaries, even obscurantists, among those who bow before Jesus as their Lord. None the less these, as a body, are still both the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Despite all their shortcomings they



bear in themselves the hope of the world both for time and eternity.

In writing this book the author has made large use of a series of Sunday afternoon sermon-lectures he delivered in the North Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh during the Fall and Winter of 1913-1914.

The author of this book is deeply grateful to Prof. Warfield—as he is sure its readers will be—for the introduction he has written. Moreover, among the many to whom he is indebted for such excellencies as this book may possess there is no one to whom he is more deeply indebted than to Prof. Warfield—first as a teacher and later as a writer.

The quotations from Scripture are, for the most part, according to the American Revised Version.

AUGUST, 1914.



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## INTRODUCTION

**I**T gives me great pleasure to respond to Mr. Craig's request that I should say a few words which may serve as an introduction to this book. The book seems to me to meet admirably a very distinct need. We live very busy lives nowadays. And in the hurry and fret of these busy lives we are sometimes in danger of permitting to grow dim to us things which are too precious to let slip from our minds. In a direct and telling way Mr. Craig calls some of these back to our memories. He reminds us of who Jesus is, what He has done, and what He is to us. It is good to listen to him and through his quiet words to hear the voice of Jesus Himself speaking to our souls. We shall scarcely be able to read the book without feeling that we have gained in the clearness and firmness of our knowledge of our Lord.

Mr. Craig calls his book, "Jesus as He Was and Is." He means by that to remind us that Jesus is to-day all He ever was. That there is nothing He has been to any past genera-

tion, back to the first—the generation which knew Him in the flesh—that He may not be, that He is not, to this generation—the generation in which we live and which we may be sometimes tempted to fear has begun to forget Him. That there is nothing He has ever been to even the greatest of His saints, that He is not to the weakest one of us who would fain believe himself His. We are inevitably reminded of that great triumphant shout which we find imbedded in the Epistle to the Hebrews—“Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day the same,—and for ever!” No better motto could be found for the book and I think I could do nothing better in the way of an introduction to it than simply to write this motto on its forefront.

What the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was doing when he put on record for us this great declaration, was exhorting his readers to bear in mind those notable Christian men who had taught the gospel to them, and to mold themselves, whether for living or for dying, on their shining example. As truly as that great cloud of witnesses which he had lately summoned from the records of the Old Testament to cheer them in their struggles, these men had been heroes of faith. He bids his readers to note with care how they had borne them-

selves in the troubles and trials which filled their lives,—up to the very end. He urges them to imitate the faith which had brought them so triumphantly through them all. And then to encourage them in this high endeavor, he suddenly raises their eyes from the servants to the Master, crying aloud: “Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day the same,—and for ever!” As much as to say that if they repeated the faith of their teachers they could not fail to repeat also their victory. It was to no doubtful experiment that He called them, but to a sure triumph. Jesus Christ remained the same through every change and chance of time. He was as accessible to them as He had been to their predecessors, and as ready and as able to sustain and to succor. They had but to trust in Him and they could not be put to shame.

The appeal is made, we may say, to the faithfulness of Christ. But something deeper than faithfulness is meant. We do not speak of the faithfulness of the rock, the house that is built upon which will stand, though the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon it. Jesus Christ not only will be faithful but cannot but be faithful. The appeal is made, we may say again, then, to the unchangeableness of Christ. But something higher than unchangeableness is

meant. It is not merely to a passive quality of being that we are pointed, but to an active principle of conduct. Jesus Christ is not merely abstractly incapable of change, but unalterably constant in His dealings with His people. Put the two together, then, and we may say that the appeal is made to the immutable steadfastness of Christ. But we still fall below this great declaration. These words are too cold and impersonal. We must pour more emotion into them, and relate them more closely to our hearts. Instead of "immutable" we must say at least "unfailing," and for "steadfastness" we must say at least "trustiness." What those old Hebrew Christians were assured was that Jesus Christ is unfailingly trusty; and there is included in that the implication not only that He will but also that He can. They might safely trust Him as those great men did whose lives and deaths they reverently looked back upon; for He remains the same trusty Lord and Saviour now that He was then. The appeal, in a word, is to the love of Christ; to His changeless love; to His almighty changeless love. We do not get its full force until we emphasize each of these three ideas in turn. What the writer was telling his readers is that the same Christ was theirs in whom their revered



teachers had trusted—the same Christ in the same almighty, changeless love; and therefore to trust in Him would bring them to the same victory, the contemplation of which in their teachers filled them with mingled awe and rejoicing.

This great assurance, now, does not belong to the Hebrew Christians of two thousand years ago alone. It comes to us to-day with as direct an application and as clear an encouragement as it brought to them. There is nothing about it which can confine it to any one time, or to any one state of circumstances, or to any one body of hearers. Rather, it is expressly made universal. It does not say merely, Jesus Christ is yesterday and to-day the same: though, had it said only that, it still would be impossible to bind it to only one yesterday and only one to-day. It adds to this declaration the further words, “and for ever.” And this addition can mean nothing else than that the assurance given was expressly and emphatically intended to be of universal application. Not only could the first readers of the Epistle be sure that they would find Jesus Christ all that they had seen their venerated teachers find Him. All, everywhere, throughout all ages, have but to taste and see His like preciousness

to them. For "Jesus Christ is yesterday and to-day the same—and for ever."

There is even reason to suspect that the declaration was not first framed for the occasion on which we find it here used, and was not first made to these Hebrew Christians, as an incitement to them to imitate the victorious faith of their teachers. The suddenness with which it is introduced, the compact vividness of its language, its completeness in itself, the absence from it of all connectives, its exclamatory form, the stately grandeur of its manner,—more like a trumpet blast than an argument: all give it the appearance of one of those crisp, proverbial announcements, in which the first Christians early learned to crystallize the essence of their faith, and by the repetition of which they were accustomed to exhort and encourage one another in their temptations and trials. We meet with these golden nuggets of compressed Christian confession in the so-called Pastoral Epistles, set off to our observation as "faithful sayings." "This is a faithful saying," says Paul and reminds his readers of one of the maxims of fundamental Christian faith, which he thus adopts and adapts to his momentary purpose. We meet with them also, however, elsewhere, scattered through the Epistles without any for-

mal intimation being given of their origin in the general heart of the Christian community or of their proverbial character. Surely we meet with one of them in this stirring battle-cry of the Christian life: "Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day the same—and for ever!" In point of compressed pregnancy of language it rivals the Moslem's cry, "No God but God!" or the old Jewish "confession," "Jehovah our God, Jehovah One," while for depth of emotional appeal it passes far beyond either: "Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day the same—and for ever!" Here vibrates a passionate assertion of the unfailing trustiness of Jesus Christ, the Christian's support and stay, the eternal refuge of His people.

If this be at all the case, then, in claiming this great assurance for ourselves, we do not so much apply to our needs words spoken first to the Hebrew Christians of two millenniums ago to encourage them to increase of faith. The writer of the Epistle rather applies to their needs words put together first for us and by us—by the general Christian community, for every Christian of that and of every time reminding himself of the Rock on which he builds the house of his life. And in that case the words must be taken in their most unlimited mean-

ing, and come to us to-day, after all these years, as the embodiment of our common Christian assurance. They remind us that Jesus Christ is the strong Son of God who has come into the world to save sinners, and who, through all the world's life, as age passes on into age, abides the same strong Saviour—yea, forever. In the midst of the trials of life and its perplexities, its temptations and its failures, its errors and its sins, what we want to know—what we want with all the strength of our hearts to believe—is that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and to-day, and forever; that we can safely venture on Him with our all,—whether for this life or for the life to come. It is this assurance that this great Christian battle-cry gives us.

And it is because Mr. Craig's book seems to me to tend to bring this assurance to the men and women of to-day that I am glad to commend it to them.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

*Princeton,*

AUGUST, 1914.

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CHAPTER ONE: JESUS AND HIS  
PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN  
RELIGION

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And Jesus spake unto them saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

—*Matthew xxviii: 18-20.*

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

—*The Acts vii: 59.*

## I

### JESUS AND HIS PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

**T**HE center of controversy to-day among those who call themselves Christians has to do with the place that Jesus himself occupies in the religion that He founded. More definitely expressed, it has to do with the question whether Jesus was simply a subject of the Christian religion or whether He is its object.

If Jesus was simply a subject of the Christian religion, His uniqueness lies wholly in the fact that He was the first Christian, and the place He occupies in the Christian religion is essentially the same as that which Buddha occupies in Buddhism or Confucius in Confucianism or even as that which Martin Luther occupies in Lutheranism or John Wesley in Methodism. If, however, Jesus be the object of the Christian religion, it is evident that He occupies an essentially different position, inasmuch as in this case it becomes us to look upon Him not simply as the first of Christians or the best of men,

not simply as a pioneer in religion, not simply as a pattern in the things of the spirit, but as One upon whom we are dependent, as One whom we should worship and obey; and hence that the Christian religion is indebted to Jesus, not only as its founder but as One to whom it owes its very existence even at the present hour.

It is not a matter of dispute how Jesus has been conceived by the Church of all ages, including the Church as it exists to-day in all its great branches. In view of the creeds of the Church, both ancient and modern, and more especially in view of the hymns and devotional writings of the Church, both ancient and modern, none is so bold as to deny that, generally speaking, among those calling themselves Christians, Jesus has been and is regarded as the object of the Christian religion.

Neither is it a matter of dispute that Jesus was so regarded by those who wrote the New Testament, and that wherever we open its pages we are confronted by a religious life that is grounded in and that is determined by Jesus himself. We read the life of Jesus as that life is portrayed in the Gospels and we are struck with the fact that He ever centers attention upon Himself as the object of love and trust



and obedience. We find, indeed, that the personal pronoun plays a very large part in the utterances of Jesus, so large a part that if we judge Him by ordinary standards we must charge Him with intolerable arrogance and conceit. "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi:27-29); "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall possess the light of life" (John viii:12); "I am the door; if by me any man enter in he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture" (John x:9); "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. xxviii:18)—these are but samples of the utterances ascribed to Jesus that preclude our seeing in Him simply a subject of religion. We read the writings of Paul, of Peter, of Luke, of John and others of the early Christians whose writings have found a place in the New Testament, but do not find that they took of-

fense at such language or that they made any attempt to weaken its significance. Rather everything points to the fact that Jesus loomed so large before them, that He occupied so vital a place in their thinking and living as amply to justify such language on His part. We find that they worshiped Christ as God, that they regarded themselves as engaged in His service and as bound by His example and precepts: moreover, that their hope both for this life and that which is to come was grounded in their confidence that He was able to save to the uttermost those who came unto God through Him.

It is evident, therefore, that if we are to conceive of Jesus as He was conceived of in the early Christian community and as, broadly speaking, He has been and is conceived of by all the great branches of the Christian Church, we must not merely think of Him as a subject of the Christian religion but as its object, as that in which it finds its center, as that from which everything proceeds and upon which everything terminates.

We cannot do this, however, unless we see in Jesus a divine, a supernatural being—one whose rank in the scale of being places Him alongside of God. For, of course, to make one who falls short of God the object of religion

would be to yield to a creature that homage and adoration that belongs only to the Creator. There are those, however, even among those who call themselves Christians—and perhaps their number was never larger than at present—who take offense at this supernaturalism and who if they do not seek to eliminate it altogether, at least seek to place it as far in the background as possible. As a result or at least largely as a result of this, there are an increasing number who would have us see in Jesus simply a subject of the Christian religion. Now, of course, if Jesus be simply a subject of the Christian religion, *i. e.*, simply the first Christian, the first of the series of believers of the particular kind we call Christian, there is no special reason why we should emphasize the fact that He was a divine, a supernatural being. Rather the more we emphasize this fact the more difficult will we find it to see in Jesus simply a subject of religion, because if to be a Christian is simply to share the religious life of Jesus, to repeat in ourselves that attitude toward God and man and the world that was exemplified in Jesus, then the more thoroughly Jesus was one with us *in all respects* the better fitted would He be to be our pattern—inasmuch as it is evident to all that if Jesus was God

as well as man, it is impossible that we should share all of His experiences. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that those who take offense at the supernaturalism of the New Testament should seek to commend to us a Jesus who is simply a subject of religion. In fact, the logic of the situation is such that this is only what we might have expected.

Moreover, in view of the fact that the logic of the situation demands that those who seek to eliminate the supernatural from Jesus should preach a Jesus who is simply a subject of religion, it is not even surprising that many of these should be found preaching an essentially Christless Christianity, that while still calling themselves Christians they should be found saying that as far as their religious lives are concerned it is a matter of relative unimportance, even, whether or no Jesus ever existed. For, of course, if the significance of Jesus lies simply in the fact that He was the first Christian and that as such He initiated the Christian movement, and hence that His value lies wholly in the spheres of teaching and example, it can no longer be maintained that Jesus himself is essential to Christianity as it exists to-day any more than it can be maintained that Luther is essential to Lutheranism as it exists to-day

or that Wesley is essential to Methodism as it exists to-day. No doubt there are good Lutherans who know but little about Martin Luther, just as there are good Methodists who know but little about John Wesley; and yet even if all knowledge of Luther and Wesley should fade from men's minds we would still have good Lutherans and good Methodists as long as men conceived of God and the world and man after the methods of Luther and Wesley, and that because the bond that binds them together is not their personal allegiance to Luther and Wesley but their common acceptance of their views of life and the world. And so, if to be a Christian is simply to hold views concerning God and man and the world similar to those that Jesus held, and to manifest in our lives, as best we may, those same graces of the spirit, it is evident that Christianity might continue to thrive even if Jesus himself should be wholly forgotten, for in that case the bond that binds Christians together is not their personal allegiance to Jesus himself but their common acceptance of the principles that He taught and exemplified. There is nothing in the nature of the case, therefore, to prevent those who see in Jesus simply a subject of the Christian religion from preaching a Christianity in which Jesus

himself occupies no essential place. In fact it would seem as though they were bound to preach a Christianity in which Jesus is not absolutely indispensable.

No doubt most of those who commend to us a Jesus who is simply a subject of the Christian religion hold that such a Jesus actually existed and that He functioned in the religious life of humanity as none other. Whether they are warranted in doing this may indeed be questioned, seeing that the only Jesus witnessed to by our sources is a Jesus who is at the same time the object of the Christian religion. All I am concerned to point out in this connection, however, is that, for these, the question of the historicity of Jesus is not a question of life or death for Christianity. It is otherwise, however, for those who see in Jesus the object of the Christian religion. With them it is a question of absolute importance. For them a Christianity without Jesus or even a Christianity in which Jesus does not occupy an absolutely indispensable place is unthinkable. Eliminate Jesus or assign Him a place lower than the highest and Christianity as they understand it would no longer exist.

Now no doubt that view of Christianity that conceives of Jesus as simply a subject of re-

ligion can be presented attractively and in a way that little is said that every Christian does not approve of. As we listen to its advocates we are, as a rule, led to dissent not so much because of what is said as because of what is not said. With most of what they say I find myself agreeing, and yet nothing is more certain to my mind than that they leave out of consideration that which is most vital, that which is most essential to any adequate conception of the Christian religion. In fact, unless a man believes more than they do, I am unable to understand how he is warranted in believing as much as they do. The views concerning God and man and the universe they commend to us are, no doubt, in large part, true, seeing they have been derived from Jesus himself, but what guaranty we have that these views are right views is more than I can see unless Jesus be infinitely more than the first Christian. If Jesus was simply the first Christian, what assurance have we that He was not mistaken in His representation of reality? In that case why should it be supposed that we are incapable of improving on His views or why should it even be supposed that the time will never come when we will be warranted in setting aside His views altogether? How can we suppose



that in a Jew, who lived 1,900 years ago, is to be found the norm for the religious thought and life of all ages unless this Jew was infinitely more than these imagine?

In order, however, that we may realize how true it is that this view leaves out of consideration that which is most essential to Christianity it is only necessary that we keep a firm grip upon two facts. In the first place, we need to keep clearly before us the fact that Christianity is primarily a personal religion, that at heart it consists not in a system of doctrines or a code of ethics, still less in a system of philosophy or an imposing ritual, but in loving and loyal allegiance to a person. It is evident that we cannot speak of Jesus as simply a subject of the Christian religion without eliminating this fundamental distinction between Christianity and the other religions of the earth and without, as I have already intimated, assigning Him a position in the Christian religion similar to that which Buddha and Mohammed occupy in the religions they founded.

It is even more important, in the second place, that we keep clearly before us the fact that Christianity is essentially a religion of redemption, that at its very heart lies the conviction that the Jesus, who stands at its center, is a



Saviour both from the guilt and the power of sin, in the sense that He actually saves those who put their trust in Him, and hence that the great burden of its message to the world is embodied in the words: "This is a faithful saying and one worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Eliminate this idea and we may call what is left Christianity, but it is not Christianity as Christianity was understood by the Apostles and as it has been and is understood by all the great branches of the Christian Church. And yet, of course, unless Jesus be something other than the first of Christians and the best of men, it is inconceivable that He should be a Saviour in the sense in which Christianity proclaims Him to be such. He can be such a Saviour only if He lives to-day as one who is able to save and who does save all those who put their trust in and obey Him.

However much, therefore, of the true and the good and the beautiful those may proclaim who refuse to look upon Jesus as the object of religion, I cannot but feel that they leave out of consideration that which is most vital to any adequate conception of the Christian religion. Men may indeed say—men are saying to-day—that this is the only sort of Christianity that

commends itself to our modern world and that by preaching a Jesus who is the object as well as a subject of religion we are keeping men out of the churches and preventing that unity of thought and life so much desired by us all. I do not believe that this is true, yet in so far as it may be true, my influence will go to keep these men out of the churches and to continue that difference of religious opinion that exists even among those who call themselves Christians. To me it is a matter of comparative indifference whether men embrace Christianity unless it be a Christianity in which Jesus himself is the central object. Moreover, I do not think that unity of thought and life in any body of men is worth striving for, unless it be a unity that finds its center in loving and loyal allegiance to Jesus Christ. We read in John's Gospel that in the days of His flesh there was a division among the people because of Him, and we may be sure that there will continue—and that there ought to continue—to be a division of the people because of Him until all men find in Him their common Lord.

I have pointed out the fundamental difference between those who see in Jesus simply a subject of the Christian religion and those who see in Him at the same time its object—a dif-

ference so radical that those who see in Jesus simply the subject of religion, especially in view of the fact that such might conceivably dispense with Jesus altogether, are not entitled to be called Christians at all as, broadly speaking, Christianity has always been understood and as it is understood by all the great branches of the Christian Church.

I am not seeking to convey the impression, however, that we should look upon Jesus as the object of religion, as One whom we should trust and obey as a divine being, merely because He has been so conceived by the Church of all ages, though no doubt this consideration is fitted to commend it powerfully to our attention. Our ultimate warrant for so conceiving of Jesus is, of course, those considerations or evidences that, in my judgment, have amply justified the Church of all ages in so thinking of Jesus. It is beside my purpose to develop these considerations—that would be to open up the whole field of “Christian evidences”—apart from reminding you again that this conception of Jesus is so imbedded in the Christian tradition, both apostolic and post-apostolic, that every bit of evidence that goes to prove Christianity the true religion goes to prove at the same time that this

is how we ought to conceive of Jesus, and not otherwise.

And now permit me to remind you in conclusion that it is because Jesus occupies such a position in the Christian religion that the question, What think ye of Christ? assumes such tremendous importance. If Jesus had been simply a subject of religion, our personal attitude toward Him could not be a matter of supreme moment; in fact in that case we would not be able to assume personal relations with Jesus any more than we are able to assume personal relations with Augustine or Luther or Wesley. In that case the question, What think ye of His teachings? might indeed be of much moment; but the question, What think ye of Christ himself? in the sense of, What personal relations do you sustain to the person of Jesus? would be unintelligible. To perceive, however, that Jesus is the object of religion is to perceive that He is the living One in whose hands are the issues of life, and hence that the attitude we take up toward Him is indeed a matter of weal or woe, of heaven or hell, of life or death. Surely Paul was a typical Christian, and yet we know that Paul possessed calmness and confidence of soul, throughout life and in the presence of death, not merely because he could have said,

“My life has been brought under the influence of the teaching and example of Jesus”; but because he could say, “I know in whom I have put my trust and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”



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## CHAPTER TWO: WHENCE CAME JESUS?

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What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is He?  
—*Matthew xxii: 42.*

And the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

—*John i: 14.*



## II

### WHENCE CAME JESUS?

**T**HE question that Jesus put to the Pharisees, What think ye of the Christ?

Whose Son is He? raises the problem of His parentage, or, more broadly speaking, of His origin. Was He simply the son of David and so of purely earthly parentage or origin? Or was He at the same time the son of God and so of divine origin in a sense in which others are not? In other words, can He be explained as a product of purely earthly influences, in the sense in which other men are, or must we posit an exceptional irruption of the divine into the sphere of the human to account for Him?

It lies, of course, upon the very surface of the New Testament narrative that the Christ of the New Testament—assuming that He actually lived and walked among men—was of divine origin, one who cannot be inclosed in purely human molds, one who cannot be explained by the laws of heredity plus those of environment, one whose rank in the scale of beings places Him alongside of God.

For recall, if you will, how the character of Jesus is dramatized in the pages of the New Testament. There He is pictured as the son of David and yet at the same time as David's Lord; as one who was the son of Mary and yet at the same time God over all blessed forever; as one who was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh and yet who might readily have clung to His equality with God; as one who was in the form of a servant and yet whose proper form was the form of God; as one who increased in stature and yet who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever; as one who increased in wisdom and yet who knew the Father even as the Father knew Him; as one who was born under the law and who fulfilled the law and yet who in His own name gave a new and more perfect law; as one who died at the mandate of a Roman governor and yet who is the Prince of the kings of the earth; as one who was received up into heaven out of the sight of His disciples and yet who continues to be with them even to the end of the world.

If such a being as this ever walked this earth, it is evident that He was not of purely earthly origin, and hence that in answer to the question, Whose Son is He? we must say in substance with Paul that while He was the son of David

according to the flesh yet that His personality as a whole can be explained only if we affirm at the same time that He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

But while this is true, and generally admitted to be true, it may not be apparent at once that the Christ of the New Testament was possessed of a divine as well as a human parentage. There are those, at any rate, who admit the truth of all that has been said and yet who maintain that the Christ of the New Testament is a purely earthly product. They do this by maintaining that the Christ of the New Testament is an ideal creation, essentially a product of the imagination, and hence that the Christ of the New Testament never actually existed. In other words these maintain that the Christ of the New Testament has the reality of one of Shakespeare's characters or one of the characters of a modern novel rather than the reality that attaches to an historical figure like Grant or Lincoln. Even when these use language, however, that implies that the character of Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament has no more reality than the figures of mythology, or the figures that appear in the pages of poets and novelists, they do not necessarily mean to

imply that there was no basis in fact for the character of Jesus as found in the New Testament—even myths have some basis in fact, and of course the characters that appear in the pages of poets and novelists are drawn largely from life—but they do mean to imply that the real Jesus was so added to, so transformed, so idealized that He is no longer to be classed with historical figures like Grant and Lincoln but rather with such figures of fiction as meet us in the pages of poets and novelists.

If such be the reality that attaches to the character of Jesus, then it is evident that the question of our text calls for a figurative rather than for a literal reply; and hence that when we are questioned concerning His parentage we ought to reply that it is purely human, that He is wholly a product of this earth in the sense that we do not need to assume any peculiar manifestation of God to account for Him. As the characters of Shakespeare owe their existence to the brain of Shakespeare, so the character of Christ, as it appears in the New Testament, owes its existence, directly or indirectly, to those who wrote the books of the New Testament.

The theory that the Jesus of the New Testament is essentially a fictitious character is a

specious one, though no doubt the chief consideration in its favor in the eyes of the modern world is the fact that it offers an explanation of Jesus that is free from the miraculous. And yet plausible as the theory may be in itself, it is none the less a theory that must be accepted with closed eyes if it is to be accepted at all. We must not look at it too critically; we must not scrutinize it too closely: the moment it is investigated, the moment we ask whether it really affords an adequate explanation of the facts it collapses like a soap bubble and we are left wondering why we ever imagined it an explanation of the facts.

Not to mention others, there are two insurmountable obstacles in the way of regarding the character of Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament as fictitious, as a product of the imaginative genius. The first of these is the impossibility of accounting for the Jesus of the New Testament unless we assume that He actually existed. A man of ordinary ability can give us a report of what he has seen and heard but it takes a man of extraordinary ability to invent or to create. Now, by common consent, the character of Jesus surpasses that to be found in any other book. No other character has so caught and held the attention of men.

No other character presents such a combination of virtues with such an absence of defects. Who in that early Christian community was capable of creating the character of Jesus? Who for that matter in any age, apart from the writers of the New Testament, have shown themselves capable of dealing imaginatively with the supernatural without falling into the grotesque and the absurd? Certainly if the Jesus of the New Testament is essentially an ideal character, we must no longer place Shakespeare and Goethe at the head of creative geniuses, for in that case this honor unquestionably belongs to those who are responsible for the New Testament. I submit that no explanation of the character of Jesus is adequate save that which confesses that the early disciples have simply given us a description of that which they had seen and heard and hence that they were reporters rather than creators.

The second of these insurmountable obstacles in the way of seeing in Jesus essentially a fictitious being is the manner in which He has energized in history. Even if it could be supposed that the early disciples so idealized the character of Jesus that the Jesus of the Gospels is not the Jesus of history, it would still be necessary to explain the effects that Jesus

has wrought in history. This is the point to which I want to direct your attention—if the Jesus of the New Testament is essentially a fictitious character, how has it come about that He has energized in history as though He were essentially a reality? Some write at times as though the problem raised by the story of Jesus did not differ essentially from that raised by any other unusual story, as though it were on a par, for instance, with the legends that cluster about the saints of the middle ages. There is, however, this essential difference, a difference so fundamental moreover as to preclude any fair comparison between them. These legends have had no appreciable influence on history while the personality of Jesus—whether we regard it as real or fictitious—has been the most potent of all influences in shaping and molding the life of our western world. As the late Prof. Fairbairn put it: “We have not solved, we have not even stated and defined, the problem as to the person of Christ when we have written the life of Jesus, for that problem is raised even less by the Gospels than by Christ’s place and function in the collective history of man; or, to be more correct, by the life described in the Gospels and the phenomena represented by universal history viewed in their reciprocal and



interpretative interrelations'' (*The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 13). What demands explanation from this point of view as Prof. Fairbairn also points out is, in the first place, "how has it come about that Christ's historical action has corresponded to His fictitious rather than His real character?" and, in the second place, "What sort of blind accident or ironical indifference to right can reign in a universe which has allowed to fiction greater powers than have been granted to truth?" In other words, unless we assume the reality of Christ, we have an historical effect of world-magnitude for which we have no adequate explanation. The history of the world being what it is we are precluded from looking upon Jesus as other than a reality. In fact, if the influence Jesus has exerted over the lives and institutions of men do not prove Him a reality, then it may be safely said that there is no such thing as reality and that men in searching for truth and for a rational explanation of things are but "disquieting themselves in vain." And in that case what significance can we attach to these lives of ours? Could we do better than make our own the words of Macbeth and say: "Life is but a walking shadow; a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and



then is heard no more—a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”?

If, then, it be impossible to account for Jesus as a problem in literature without assuming that He actually lived and walked among men, and more especially if it be impossible to account for the history of the world, as it has evolved during the last nineteen centuries, without assuming that He was, and is, a reality, it is evident that He was not of ordinary earthly parentage and that the problem that confronts us—seeing that Jesus is portrayed in the Scriptures as both man and God—is not simply the birth and development of a great man but at the same time the coming into earthly conditions of the Son of God himself. Assuming, as we are forced to do, that the Jesus of the New Testament was an historical reality, it is evident that what we call the incarnation was not so much the birth of a unique man as a momentous event in the eternal life of God himself, and hence that Paul and John were not indulging in speculation but stating the sober truth when the one wrote “Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a ser-

vant, being made in the likeness of men'' (Philippians ii:5-7), and when the other wrote "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. \* \* \* And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth'' (John i:1, 2, 14).

Now, it is the light of what has been said that we ought to consider the accounts that the New Testament itself gives of the parentage of Jesus. These accounts are found in the opening chapters of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels. Are we to regard these accounts as sober statements of truth, or are we to place them on a par with the mythological tales of a somewhat similar nature that meet us in other connections? Assuredly our reply cannot be made without reference to the question whether the life and career of Jesus stamp Him as a divine being. If I believe that there was nothing in His life and career inconsistent with my regarding Him as a mere man, *i. e.*, one who was wholly the product of the forces ordinarily energizing in this world, I might not esteem the story of the virgin birth credible. In that case I might feel certain not only that He had a human mother but that He had a human father

like the rest of us, and hence look upon the accounts of Matthew and Luke as containing myths and legends rather than history. But as I cannot consider the life and character and influence of Jesus without having forced upon me the conclusion that He was more than a man, that He was indeed God manifest in the flesh, these accounts of a supernatural birth seem altogether credible to me. In other words, if I were to cease to regard Jesus Christ as a divine being I might easily cease to believe in the virgin birth; but as long as I continue to regard Him as divine I am sure that I will continue to believe in the virgin birth. It may be going too far to say that if Jesus was a divine being He must have been born of a virgin; but surely if He was a divine being no sufficient reason can be advanced for doubting Matthew's and Luke's accounts of His birth, seeing that they come to us as integral parts of their Gospels and as such entitled to the same credence as the other portions of their Gospels. Surely there is nothing incredible in the notion that a supernatural being should have come into the world in a supernatural manner.

I hold, therefore, that the question of the virgin birth is inextricably bound up with the

question of Christ's divinity. If, then, one should say to me, I do not believe in the virgin birth, I would straightway ask him, Do you believe in the divinity of Jesus? If he answered No, and could not be moved from that position, I should cherish little hope of being able to persuade him that a virgin was the mother of Jesus. But if he answered Yes, then I should cherish such a hope because I should feel that a mere acquaintance with the facts of the case would be sufficient to convince him of this truth. That I am warranted in this is evidenced by the fact that practically all those who reject the divinity of Jesus reject at the same time the virgin birth, while practically all those who accept the divinity of Jesus accept at the same time the virgin birth. No doubt there are exceptions, even here, but no one will deny that the facts are substantially as I have stated them. It is clear, therefore, that I am not alone in holding—that men in general have held—that the question of the virgin birth is but a part of the larger question of Christ's divinity or, to speak strictly, of His deity. Do we on Christmas Day merely commemorate the birth of a great man? Then the accounts of Matthew and Luke may well seem incredible. Do we on that day commemorate the coming into this

world of the only begotten Son of God? Then there is nothing incredible in the gospel accounts, because everything is in perfect harmony with what might be expected at the coming of such a being into this world.

I have sought to make clear not only that Jesus is described in the New Testament as the son of God no less than the son of Mary, but that in Him we have to do with an objective reality, with—to use Dr. Fairbairn's expression—a mystery of nature rather than a mystery of art. To perceive this is to perceive the inadequacy of every theory of life in which Jesus does not find a natural and logical place. When a lawyer in arguing a case presents a theory of the case that leaves out of consideration some important item of testimony, all his opponents needs to do to prove the inadequacy of his theory is to point to that item of testimony and show that it does not find a natural and logical place in the theory of the case that has been presented. And so when men urge upon us systems of thought or theories of life and of conduct in which the Jesus of the New Testament does not find a natural and logical place, all we need to do to point out the inadequacy of these theories is to show that they are urged while leaving out of consideration the

central fact of the world's history. For instance, here is a man who urges upon us a thoroughgoing theory of evolution, according to which all that has taken place in nature and history is but the evolving, the unfolding of the potentialities contained in the original world stuff. Now we have no quarrel with evolutionary theories and we do not question the fact that they embody much of truth, and yet while they contain truth it is evident that they do not contain the whole truth and that because the Jesus of the New Testament cannot be made to square with a thoroughgoing scheme of evolution. Because certainly Jesus was not simply the result of a favorable conjunction of hereditary influences. In Him certainly we have an extraordinary irruption of the divine into the sphere of the human. And what is true of any thoroughgoing theory of evolution is true of every theory, whether it be scientific, moral or religious, that is urged upon us. Unless Jesus finds within them a natural and logical place, they are, to say the least, inadequate.

What about ourselves? Does Jesus occupy a place in our thoughts and in our lives consistent with His inherent greatness? Or are we ignoring the greatest of all facts, the most significant of all realities?

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## CHAPTER THREE: WHY JESUS CAME

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Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation that  
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

—*I Timothy i: 15.*



### III

#### WHY JESUS CAME

I AM going to speak this afternoon concerning the why and wherefore of Christ's coming into this world. In order that I may do so I have taken as my text a saying, current in the early Church, that Paul cites in his first letter to Timothy. This saying seems peculiarly suited to our purpose because, while bearing the stamp of Paul's approval, it comes to us as a saying in which the early Christian community had crystallized its practical belief in the Incarnation, and so not as embodying truths that are enunciated for the first time but rather as embodying truths that have been tested in the fires of experience and not been found wanting.

It lies upon the surface of this great utterance that the Apostolic Church believed in the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, for, of course, if He *came* He must have existed before He came. This thought was involved in what was said in the preceding chapter and perhaps calls for no special mention in this connection. I want to

remind you, however, that in our study of Jesus Christ it is of the utmost importance that we interpret His life in the light of His preëxistence. It is important, in the first place, in order that we may keep constantly before us the fact that the Incarnation was not simply the birth of a great man but rather the entering into human conditions of the only-begotten Son of God, and hence that we may ever realize that in Jesus Christ we are face to face with the God-man. It is important, in the second place, in order that we may adequately appreciate the service that Jesus has rendered us. It is simply impossible for us adequately to appreciate what Jesus has done for us unless we remember that the Son of Man *came* not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. It is much that a child of earth should devote himself wholly and entirely to the interests of others, but it is infinitely more that the Son of Heaven should have denuded himself of that glory that He had had with the Father before the world was, in order that assuming the conditions of humanity He might devote himself to the furtherance of our welfare. As one has put it: "We shall never understand the Servant-Christ until we understand that He was and is the eternal Son of

the Father. His service began long before He rendered help to any of the miserable here on earth. His service began when He laid aside not the garments of the earth but the vesture of the heavens, and girded himself not with the cincture woven in man's loom but with the flesh of our humanity, and being found in fashion as a man bowed himself to enter into the conditions of earth. This was the first and the chiefest of all His acts of self-sacrifice, and the sanctity and awfulness of it runs through the list of all His deeds and make them unspeakably great. It was much that His hands should heal, that His lips should comfort, that His heart should bleed with sympathy for sorrow. But oh, it was more that He had hands to touch, that He had lips to speak to human hearts, that He had the heart of a man and of a brother to feel with as well as for us." (A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*.)

This saying, however, not only reminds us that the early Christian community believed in the pre-existence of Jesus, it reminds us more especially of its belief as to the *why* and *wherefore* of His presence in this world. "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Now, no one will deny that the presence of so extraordinary a being on this earth raises a problem that cannot be evaded—a problem, moreover, that calls loudly for an explanation and that whether we regard His presence here from a purely intellectual or a purely ethical standpoint, *i. e.*, whether we are concerned to account for the break His coming into this world made in the order of nature or whether we are concerned to account for the presence of Him who was holy, harmless and separate from sinners in a world filled with sin and shame, in a world reeking with iniquity and blasphemy, in a world in which the thoughts of men's hearts are evil and that continually.

From an intellectual standpoint a difficulty is raised by the fact that Christ's entrance into this world involved a break in the order of nature. We live in an ordered world, in a causally connected world, in a world in which there is no place for chance or caprice. And yet unquestionably in Jesus Christ we are face to face with a miracle of fact, with that which the causes ordinarily operating in this world could not have effected. This conviction is forced upon us whether we consider the greatness of His personality or the purity of His character. For, of course, an absolutely sinless

being refuses as resolutely to square with a purely natural interpretation of the events of this world as does the presence of One whose rank in the scale of being places Him above man. Such a break in the process of nature must be accounted for. It can be accounted for, however, only as we consider it in the light of the teaching of our text—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If sin had not entered into this world Christ would never have come, but sin being here as an awful reality the coming of Christ was necessary if men were to be saved, if a fallen race was to be restored to its God.

No doubt we are frequently told that the presumption is altogether against the notion that so tremendous an event as the Incarnation should have taken place upon the stage of this little planet of ours. Most of those who tell us this would admit that there exists very strong evidence for believing in the Incarnation—evidence that would compel belief if the event was an ordinary one. The Incarnation, however, is not an ordinary event. In fact we could not conceive a more extraordinary one. It is not so surprising, therefore, that some should refuse to admit that it happened notwithstanding the strong evidence by which it is

supported. We all know that the amount of evidence required to produce faith in an event varies with the nature of the event itself. If, for instance, one or two persons of ordinary veracity should tell you that they had seen a man knocked down by an automobile you would no doubt believe them, since there is nothing very improbable about such an event. If, however, twelve of the most intelligent and upright men of this community should tell you that they had seen a man with the feet of a dog and the wings of a bird, it is not probable that you would believe them. In the one case you would believe on slight evidence; in the other you would refuse to believe in the face of exceedingly strong evidence. It is not surprising, therefore, that men should admit that the evidence in favor of the Incarnation is strong and yet that they should refuse to admit that such an event ever took place.

Now, is there such an antecedent presumption against the Incarnation as these would have us believe? I do not think so. In fact I maintain that when this event is looked at in the light of its purpose we are warranted in saying rather that the presumption is in favor of its occurrence. At this point everything hinges, so it seems to me, upon the moral and spiritual

condition of this world. If we think that this world is, on the whole, in a normal condition, morally and spiritually; that men do not stand in any real need of a Saviour from the guilt and power of sin, we will think it more or less inconceivable that God's Son should have assumed flesh and dwelt among us—because we will be unable to perceive that there was any real need for such an act on His part. But if, on the other hand, we believe that this world is in an abnormal condition, morally and spiritually; that it has gone wrong, seriously wrong, so wrong that it is a lost and condemned world; then for those who believe in the existence of a God who is interested in the welfare of His creatures, the presumption is in favor of the notion that He will intervene, that He will put forth His hand to save and to redeem.

I hold, therefore, that the credibility of the Incarnation is bound up with the question of the moral and spiritual condition of mankind. I am not alone in this. Men in general hold with me in this, as is evident from the fact that we find a close connection between men's views of the moral and spiritual condition of the race and their attitude to the Incarnation. Generally speaking, where we find men thinking that there isn't much the matter with this world,



or at least that it is in as good condition as we can fairly expect at this stage of its development, we find men who refuse to believe in Christ as God manifest in the flesh; but where we find men who recognize that this is a lost world, a world that left to itself would fester in its corruption from eternity to eternity, there we find men who perceive the need of an Incarnation and so men who are ready to assign due weight to the evidence that goes to show that God did indeed so love this world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have everlasting life.

A scarcely smaller difficulty is raised when we consider the presence of Jesus Christ in this world from an ethical point of view. We need only think of Jesus as the Holy One and to recall that He voluntarily came into this world—this world of sin—to perceive the character of the difficulty that is here raised. What is required is that we should account for the presence of One who was holy, harmless and undefiled in a world filled with sin and shame, in a world reeking with iniquity and blasphemy—and that as the result of His own choice. What is required of us is not simply that we should account for a change from one place to



another on Christ's part, His descent from heaven to earth. It is required at the same time that we account for the fact that He transferred himself from a sphere of light to one of darkness, from a world of purity and holiness to one of sin and iniquity. It would seem, under ordinary circumstances, that this is the last place to which such a person as Jesus would come. We may even go further and say that, at first sight, it would seem as though by coming into this world Jesus had placed himself in a compromising position. It is somewhat as though we should be told that a Christian man, held in high honor by all, had been seen entering one of the evil haunts of our city. Would we not ask at once for an explanation? Did he go as an officer of the law? Did he go on some errand of mercy? And unless some such explanation was offered, would we not be at a loss to account for his presence in such a place? And so it is when we hear of Jesus, the holy and the righteous One, being in this world of sin. We feel that His presence here needs accounting for. Here too, however, our text affords us the needed explanation. "This is a faithful saying and one worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." We might indeed have sup-

posed, without reflecting on His character, that Jesus came into this world to judge sinners. Our text, however, embodies the joyous thought that it was to save sinners that Jesus came into this world. There is no warrant, therefore, for supposing that He came into this world because He was attracted by sin. Far from it. Sin was that one thing that He hated with perfect hatred. He was here, rather, on an errand of mercy to sinful men, so that it was not His love of sin but His love of sinners that brought Him here.

The great thought embodied in our text, then, is the thought that it was specifically to *save* sinners that Christ Jesus came into this world. No doubt there are those who suppose that He would have come into this world even if sin had not first entered, only in that case He would not have come as the suffering One. The Scriptures, of course, nowhere discuss this question, since they were written by those who were interested in redemption rather than philosophy. And at any rate discussion as to what would have taken place if sin had not entered this world is possessed of only an academic interest. Whatever may prove to be the ultimate account of Christ's coming into the world, this at least is certain—the proximate ac-

count of His coming is to be found in this world's need of a Saviour. Everywhere in the Scriptures the coming of Christ is grounded in sin. Everywhere we are taught that it was the needy condition of men that led Him to forsake, for a season, His throne of Glory. "The Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost." "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "They that be whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick." "To this end was the Son of God manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have everlasting life." Such citations as these might be multiplied. Moreover, that which calls forth ecstatic praise on the part of the Biblical writers is the thought that the pure and holy God should have sent His Son to redeem a sinful race. "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God," cries Paul, for instance, in contemplation of this thought—"how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out." We should permit nothing, therefore, to conceal from us the fact that Christ's coming into this

sinful world was motived by His desire to seek and to save the lost.

To say that it was specifically to save sinners that Christ came into this world is not, indeed, to say that this was the only end He had in view; and yet if we are to preserve the emphasis of the Scripture we must say, without hesitation, that it was the chief end He had in view. It is true, for instance, that He came to reveal God and to be the Light of this world in things moral and spiritual. It is true that He came to reorganize society, to establish a kingdom in which justice should prevail and in which love should be the law. And yet, important as are these ends, they are none the less subordinate to the great central purpose of His coming. To regard them as of primary importance is to misunderstand the purpose of His life; it is to exalt the corollary above the main proposition; it is to value the by-product more than the principal product. Moreover, it is only as Christ saves this world from sin that His work as a Prophet and as a King becomes effective. It is sin that lies at the root of our moral and spiritual ignorance as well as of our social maladjustments, and hence it is only as sin is eliminated from our lives that we are able to profit by the knowledge that He brings as

well as adjust our social conditions to the requirements of that kingdom of love and righteousness that He is establishing in this world. We may be sure, therefore, that Christ's central purpose in coming into this world is indicated by the words of our text, "This is a faithful saying and one worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

There is wrapped up in this saying not only the thought that Christ came into this world to save sinners but that He proved sufficient for His task. It is conceivable that Jesus should have come into this world to accomplish our salvation and yet have proved unequal to the task and so have gone down to terrible, even though glorious, defeat. No thought, however, was further from the minds of those who framed this saying. They saw in Him one who had proved wholly sufficient for His task, as was evidenced to them by His resurrection from the dead as well as by that which He had wrought in their own souls.

Moreover, it is impossible that this saying should mean for us all that it meant for those early Christians unless we attach to the word "save" that same full, rich meaning that is attached to it in the Scriptures. We so often use

the word in a weakened sense as when we speak, for instance, of Lincoln as one who saved his country, or as when we speak of a slum-worker as one who saves the outcasts, that we are apt to use it in the same weakened sense when we apply it to the work of Jesus. I do not deny that it is proper to use the word in such connections, but certainly, when the word is used in the fulness of its meaning, it is Jesus alone who should be called a Saviour, for He alone “saves” in the full rich sense in which the word is used in Scripture. If we are adequately to appreciate what Jesus does for us we must make our own the words that Prof. B. B. Warfield has spoken in connection with this text:—“Jesus did all that is included in the great word ‘save.’ He did not come to induce us to save ourselves, or to help us to save ourselves, or to enable us to save ourselves. He came to **SAVE** us. And it is, therefore, that His name was called Jesus—because He should save His people from their sins. The glory of our Lord, surpassing all His other glories to usward, is just that He is our actual and complete Saviour; our Saviour to the uttermost. Our knowledge, even though it be His gift to us as our Prophet, is not our Saviour, be it as wide and as deep and as high as it is possible to conceive. The

Church, though it be His gift to us as our King, is not our Saviour, be it as holy and true as it becomes the Church, the bride of the Lamb, to be. The reorganized society in which He has placed us, though it be the product of His holy rule over the redeemed earth, is not our Saviour, be it the new Jerusalem itself, clothed in its beauty and descended from heaven. Nay, let us cut more deeply still. Our faith itself, though it be the bond of our union with Christ through which we receive all His blessings, is not our saviour. We have but one Saviour; and that one Saviour is Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing that we are and nothing that we can do enters in the slightest measure into the ground of our acceptance with God. Jesus did it all. And by doing it all He has become in the fullest and widest and deepest sense the word can bear—our *Saviour*. For this end did He come into the world—to SAVE sinners; and nothing short of the actual and complete SAVING of sinners will satisfy the account of His work given by His own lips and repeated from them by all His apostles. It is in this great fact, indeed, that there lies the whole essence of the gospel. For let us never forget that the gospel is not *good advice* but *good news*. It does not come to us to make known to us what we must



do to earn salvation for ourselves, but proclaiming to us what Jesus has done to save us. It is salvation, a completed salvation, that it announces to us; and the burden of its message is just the words of our text—that Christ Jesus came into the world to SAVE sinners.” (*The Power of God unto Salvation*, pp. 48-49.)

What significance does the great declaration of this text have for us? For Paul it contained the most vital of truths; the basis of all his hopes; his only confidence in life and death. No doubt, if we do not belong to the class called sinners we need not be concerned over the declaration of our text any more than we need be concerned about cures for consumption or cancer, so long as we are perfectly healthy. This text contains no message for the sinless. Do we belong to that class? Is it nothing to us that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? If so, it is only because we are like a man who is unconcerned about a cure for cancer only because he is unaware of the fact that he is a victim of that dread disease. For to see ourselves and others as we really are is to perceive that this would be a world without hope were it not for the fact that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners.



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## CHAPTER FOUR: JESUS AS KING

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Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.

—*Acts ii: 36.*

Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

—*Philippians ii: 9-11.*

## IV

### JESUS AS KING

**I** HAVE pointed out the need of interpreting the life of Jesus in the light of His pre-existence. Before proceeding further, I want to point out the need of interpreting His life in the light of His resurrection and ascension.

It is fundamental to the Christian view not only that Jesus was consciously alive prior to His birth at Bethlehem—for otherwise we would be forced to see in what we call the Incarnation simply the birth of a great man—but also that He is consciously alive to-day. The object of our faith as Christians is not simply a Jesus that was. The object of our faith is, at the same time, a Jesus that is. The resurrection and the ascension are, therefore, fundamental because they are the transition points between the Jesus that was and the Jesus that is. Apart from them the whole history of the Christian Church is inconceivable. For as the late Prof. Fairbairn said: “The resurrection

created the Church, the risen Christ made Christianity and even now it stands or falls with Him. \* \* \* If it be true that no living Christ ever issued from the tomb of Joseph, then that tomb became the grave not only of a man but of a religion with all the hopes built upon it and all the splendid enthusiasms it has inspired.”

While then, as I have pointed out, the historicity of Jesus is a matter of fundamental importance, yet it is equally important that we realize that Jesus is more than an historical character. We must never forget that the crucifixion was followed by the resurrection and the ascension, and hence that Jesus differs from others not only by virtue of the fact that He possessed a pre-existent life, but equally by virtue of the fact that He possesses a post-mortem life. In saying that Jesus alone possesses a post-mortem life I do not, of course, mean to imply that at death others pass out of existence; but I do mean to imply that, though they continue to exist, they cease to be active in this world's affairs. We are no longer conscious of their presence and any influence they may exert is simply the after-effects of that which they did while on the earth. It is otherwise, however, with Jesus. He is still active in this world's af-

fairs, and to-day He is exerting a direct and molding influence over the lives and institutions of men similar to, though infinitely greater than, that which He exerted while He still tabernacled on the earth. In fact the secret of Christianity's progress in this world, of the hold it has on the hearts of men, lies in the fact that it brings them into contact with a living Christ, one to whom they can pray, one in whom they can put their trust, one upon whom they can build their confidence, one who is able to save unto the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

That Jesus is represented in the New Testament as more than an historical figure is evident to the most casual reader. Luke, for instance, in the preface to the book of *Acts*, tells us that in his former treatise, *i. e.*, his *Gospel*, he had dealt with the things that "Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day in which He was received up," thus implying that in this second treatise he intended to deal with the things that Jesus continued to do and teach after His ascension. In fact, if Luke himself had named the book it is probable that he would have called it *The Acts of the Risen Lord* rather than *The Acts of the Apostles*,

inasmuch as he ever looks upon the Apostles as but the instruments through whom Jesus continued to carry on His work in the world. Moreover, Luke's viewpoint is shared by all the writers of the New Testament. All its books were written subsequent to Christ's death and by men who were firmly convinced that He was a living reality. Peter speaks not only for himself but for the early Church as a whole when he says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, \* \* \* whom having not seen ye love; on whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

It is this fact that makes the New Testament the most living, the most modern, the most up-to-date of all books. It is a book that in the nature of the case can never lose its significance, seeing that it has to do with One who can say, "I am He that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive forevermore." The New Testament tells us, therefore, not only of what Jesus was but of what He is; not only of how He thought

and felt nineteen hundred years ago but of how He thinks and feels to-day; not only of the power He wielded then but of the power He wields now; not only of the fact that He received sinners while on earth but of the fact that He receives them to-day: so that He says to us as truly as He said to those who saw Him in the days of His flesh, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I am especially concerned, in this chapter, to direct your attention to the fact that Jesus exists to-day as Lord, as King, as One whose right it is to rule, as One whose will is the supreme standard of conduct, so that our first question, where matters of conduct are at issue, should ever be, not What is expedient? or What is popular? but What is the will of Jesus? What would He have me to do?

That Jesus was and is a King is a truth spread very broadly over the pages of Scripture. He was foretold as such in the Old Testament. In the psalms of David we read: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.  
\* \* \* Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts

of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." In the Prophecy of Daniel we read: "One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the ancient of days. And there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples and nations and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Moreover, at the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel said to the Virgin Mary: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." But not only was He foretold as such; He claimed to be such while He was on the earth—witness, for instance, the events of Palm Sunday. Moreover He is repeatedly spoken of as such, subsequent to the resurrection. Witness the words of Peter: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." Witness the words of Paul: "Wherefore God hath highly



exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on the earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father." While finally, not to cite the utterances of others, John in the book of Revelation speaks of the Lamb as the "King of kings and Lord of lords."

That Jesus was and is a King is a fact, moreover, that is recognized and acknowledged by all branches of the Christian Church—as, of course, was to be expected in view of the teachings of Scripture. Roman Catholics and Protestants are at one, at least, in acknowledging Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. But while Roman Catholics and Protestants are at one in acknowledging Christ as King, they differ somewhat radically in their conception of the manner in which He exercises His kingship. Roman Catholics would have us believe that Christ has appointed the Pope as His viceroy on earth; and hence that He exercises His kingly authority through the instrumentality of another. In that case we do not deal directly with the King himself but with His vicar or deputy, the Pope. It is no doubt con-

ceivable that Christ should have thus delegated His authority to another. There are no valid reasons, however, for supposing that He actually did. We hold, therefore, with the whole Protestant world, that the Pope presumes to exercise an authority that does not rightfully belong to him; and hence that we are directly responsible to King Jesus himself.

No doubt, the kingship of Jesus is widely ignored. All about us we see those who say by their actions, if not by their words, that they do not admit His right to rule over them. It is necessary for us to distinguish, therefore, between His *de facto* and His *de jure* rule, *i. e.*, between the obedience that is actually yielded Him and the obedience that is His by law and right. According to law and right Jesus is entitled to universal obedience. As a matter of fact, however, there are multitudes who refuse to yield Him the homage and obedience that is His due. We may be sure, however, that things will not always remain as they are in this respect. Because Jesus is what He is, He will make good His claims and the time will yet come when all men, willingly or unwillingly, will acknowledge His Lordship.

Let no one imagine that Christ's kingship rests upon our consent and hence that He exer-

cises authority only over those who acknowledge His kingship. It is not for you and me, it is not for any man to say, whether he will live in Christ's kingdom. No doubt, we do exercise some choice as regards the kingdoms of this world. If we do not like the way authority is exercised in one, it is our privilege to move to another more to our liking. Nothing like this is possible in connection with the kingdom of Christ, however. His kingdom is not confined to any special longitude or latitude. Go where we will, we are still within His jurisdiction and answerable to His authority. We might as well imagine that we can go where the law of gravitation does not operate as suppose that we can go where Christ does not hold sway. And hence, just as we have to reckon with the operation of the law of gravitation, whether we will or no, so we have to reckon with the rule of Jesus Christ, whether we will or no. And hence, just as it is the part of wisdom to so adjust ourselves to the law of gravitation that it will operate for our advantage and not for our disadvantage, so is it the part of wisdom for us to so adjust ourselves to Jesus Christ that the operation of His rule may bring us not woe but weal, not loss but gain, not death but life.

In this connection it is important that we note the all-inclusiveness of Christ's rule. Not only does He demand obedience from all men; He demands obedience from them in all things. This is sometimes overlooked. There are those who seem to think that life is built in hermetically sealed compartments, as it were, and that while some of these compartments are subject to Christ's sway yet that others are exempt from that sway. For instance, there are those who are kind and considerate in the home but who are hard and cruel in the market-place; or those who are just and honest in their business dealings but crooked in politics; or those who acknowledge Christ as Lord in their Church relations but who practically deny Him in all the other relations of life. As a matter of fact, however, life is not built in these hermetically seal compartments; and there is no sphere of life conceivable where Jesus does not maintain His demand that He be honored and obeyed. As King, therefore, Christ ought to be supreme in our private lives. Within this sphere we ought to strive to bring every thought and activity into captivity to Him. As King, Christ's will ought, also, to be supreme in our social and business lives. Within these spheres we should be guided by the golden rule; we should place the

emphasis upon our duties rather than our rights. Still further, as King, Christ's will ought to be supreme in our political lives. To deny this is tantamount to saying that politics ought to be Christless. This is not to say that the Church, as an institution, ought to mix in politics, but it is to say that, if we are Christians, our Christianity will manifest itself in the sphere of politics as well as in other spheres of life. Let us not imagine, then, that Christ's kingship has to do with only a part of life; it has to do with the whole of life. Wherever we may be, whatever we may do, in the world of action or of thought, we are under the dominion of, and as such responsible to, Jesus Christ.

And now, in conclusion, for our comfort and encouragement, let us remind ourselves that—assuming that we are endeavoring to yield Him that homage and obedience that is His due—Christ has placed himself under obligations to us. As the subjects of the King we do, indeed, owe him homage and obedience. At the same time, however, He, as our King, grants us support and protection. What holds good of our relations to the State holds good, in a true sense, of our relations to King Jesus. As long as we obey the laws of the State, the State will protect and defend us. If others seek to take away

our life, our liberty or our possessions we are not dependent upon our own resources: all the resources of the State are pledged for the support and defense of even the weakest and most insignificant of its citizens. And so as long as we serve Jesus as King, all His power and strength is pledged to our support and defense. No matter how weak and helpless we may be in ourselves; no matter how strong and reliant they may be who are against us, we need not fear, for greater is He that is for us than they that be against us. No doubt, if left to ourselves, we would soon be overcome of evil; but as it is King Jesus watches over us and defends us, and thus we are enabled to prevail not because of our own strength but because of the strength of Him in whom we have put our trust. Let us then be of good cheer. Though all the hosts of earth and Hell should conspire together to accomplish the undoing of the weakest of Christ's true subjects they would not succeed. Unto Him that watches over us and defends us has been committed all power and authority in heaven and on earth.

What is our attitude toward King Jesus? Are we rendering Him that homage and obedience that is His due? "I charge thee in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and of

Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession, that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus \* \* \* who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen. (I Tim. 6:13-16.)





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## CHAPTER FIVE: JESUS AS OUR EXAMPLE

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For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as  
I have done to you. —*John xiii: 15.*

He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk  
even as He walked. —*I John ii: 6.*

## V

### JESUS AS OUR EXAMPLE

THE object of our faith, as Christians, is the risen and glorified Christ. To us, Jesus Christ is not simply One who lived 1,900 years ago; He is One who lives to-day as the Lord and Life of humanity; and so One to whom we can pray, One upon whom we can build our confidence, One from whom we can obtain strength and encouragement in the battle of life.

The fact that the object of our faith lives to-day, however, does not lead us to underestimate the significance of His earthly, historical life, of which we read in the Gospels. We emphasize His risen and exalted life—the life that He lives to-day—but we do not forget either His pre-existent or His earthly life because apart from these His present life would not have that significance for us that it possesses. That is to say, we emphasize the life that Jesus lives to-day because it includes the net result of all that went before. We do not say, therefore, that the earthly life has no interest for us

because the object of our faith is Jesus as He exists to-day: we say rather that Jesus as He exists to-day would have little or no interest for us were it not for the life He lived on earth. The earthly life was, indeed, but a stage in the career of the Son of God, but it was a necessary stage and one that can never lose, for us, its significance. The life that He lived on earth, the death that He died were prerequisites to the functions He now performs. The earthly, historical life of Christ is possessed, therefore, of abiding significance. Hence we must never permit the fact that Jesus lives to-day to lead us to underestimate the significance of what He experienced in the days of His flesh.

There is, perhaps, a special need of emphasizing this thought this afternoon inasmuch as I am to speak of Jesus as our Example. No doubt, it is equally important for us to keep the earthly life of Jesus before us when we are considering other phases of His significance, seeing that apart from His earthly life He would have no practical significance for us whatever. Still it is conceivable that those who underestimate the significance of the earthly, historical life of Jesus should think of Him, in some sense or other and in some way or other, as the Saviour of the world, as the Lord and Life of human-

ity: it is scarcely conceivable, however, that such should see in Jesus their example, their ideal of conduct—the visible embodiment of that which they should be and do.

That Jesus is set before us, in the Scriptures, as an example is, of course, not open to doubt. He himself says: "I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you." Moreover, the note that is struck in these words is struck again and again not only by Jesus himself but in the preaching of the Apostolic age as it is reflected in the pages of the New Testament.

Jesus comes before us, therefore, not only as one who can say, "I am the truth," "I have always spoken accurately," "My teachings are free from the alloy of error." He comes also as one who says, "There is no contrast between what I am and what I ought to be," "I have always acted as I should have acted," "Do as I have done and your life will receive the approval of the Father." In this respect Jesus differs from all the rest of earth's great moral and spiritual teachers. There have been plenty of others who have possessed a firm conviction of the truth of that which they taught and who have not hesitated to exhort those who came under their influence to do as they said, to shape

their lives in accordance with their teachings: but none other ever said with equal emphasis, "Do as I have always done and as I always do," and that because all others have been conscious—and that in proportion as their lives have been pure and their ideals lofty—of the chasm that yawned between what they were and what they ought to have been, of the distance that their practice lagged behind their knowledge. Jesus, however, was conscious of no such contrast. He had no more hesitation about saying "Do as I do" than He had about saying "Do as I say."

There is something even more remarkable that it may be well for us to note, in passing, in this connection. The world as a whole has been more unanimous in acknowledging that Jesus lived as man never lived than it has been in acknowledging that He taught as man never taught. With most men it is easier to pick flaws in their conduct than it is to pick flaws in their teachings—I am sure that most of us would find it easier to defend our beliefs than to defend our practices. In the case of Jesus, however, the reverse has proven true. I do not, indeed, mean to imply that it is easier to pick flaws in His teachings than in His life inasmuch as I conceive both to be flawless.

What I mean, rather, is that many who have seen what they conceive to be flaws in His teachings have none the less acknowledged that His life was beyond criticism. What a host of unbelievers have paid tribute to the strength and purity of His life! No doubt, there are exceptions, as we shall see, and yet on the whole it is true that "whether or no they admit Him divine they all admire Him." Lecky, the historian, wrote: "Christianity has given to the world an ideal character who throughout all the changes of eighteen centuries has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but also the chief incentive to its practice." John Stuart Mill wrote: "Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy even for an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than the endeavor to live so that Christ would approve our life." It would be easy to multiply such citations taken from the writings of unbelievers, but these will perhaps suffice to illustrate the fact that the world has been no less unanimous—even more unanimous—in recognizing Jesus as the incomparable example than it has been in recognizing Him as the incomparable teacher.

It was, no doubt, a hard doctrine that Jesus proclaimed when He said, "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done." Unquestionably the thing proposed and commended is very difficult of realization. In fact, so difficult is the thing proposed that we are tempted to look upon it as wholly impracticable. What—we are inclined to ask—do you mean to say that I in my ordinary, everyday life, that I with my coarse, commonplace temptations, that I with my way to make and my family to support in such a world as this, that I am to take Jesus Christ as my model and endeavor to do as He did or else forfeit my right to be called a Christian? Well, unquestionably that is just about what is demanded of us. It may seem a hard doctrine, but I have no authority to change it. I am not preaching it on my own authority but on the authority of Christ himself and His Holy Apostles. We may think the demand an impracticable one, but only by affirming that Christ and His apostles were impracticable.

I know that there are those who presume to think that Christ would have achieved greater practical results if He had not insisted on so lofty an ideal. Is it not sometimes said that to set up perfection as a goal is to deaden ef-



fort and to enthrone despair? That if some lesser ideal had been proposed we might cherish some hope of attaining it, but surely no one, in these days at least, can live up to the standard that Christ set. Why then strive after it? Why seek the impossible? Now I agree with these in as far as they maintain that this ideal has never been fully realized by any of Christ's followers, but I differ from them in as far as they maintain that a man with an imperfect ideal will make greater progress in the ethical life than a man with a perfect ideal. A lowering of our standard also means a slackening of our efforts. It is ever the man with the highest ideal who is most careful to abstain from what is evil and to do what is good. Any standard that falls short of perfection permits us to look upon sin with a certain degree of allowance. All history and all experience, I believe, supports the notion that our ideal ought to be perfect no matter how imperfect may be our realization of that ideal. I believe, therefore, that Christianity has exerted a far greater influence for good than it would have exerted if it had proposed an imperfect ideal for our imitation. And hence that the Scriptures exhibit practical wisdom as well as lofty aspiration when they call upon us to imitate Jesus

Christ, to do as He did. Even if it was permitted me, then, I would not knowingly preach a lower standard of conduct than that which is exemplified in Jesus Christ.

In considering this obligation to imitate Jesus Christ we must be on our guard lest we misinterpret our duty at this point. We need to keep clearly before us, in the first place, the fact that our imitation of Jesus should be in the spirit rather than in the letter. To say that we should do as He did is not to say that we should do the same, identical things that He did. It is to say rather that we should shape our lives according to the same principles and exemplify the same spirit. The incident of the feet washing is fitted to illustrate the thought I have in mind here. A literal imitation of Jesus in this respect would mean that we ought to wash one another's feet. When we remember, however, that this act was symbolical of the whole aim and spirit of Christ's ministry we will perceive that a real imitation of Him in this respect means that our lives, as a whole, ought to be devoted to the service of others and so spent in the spirit of Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.

We need to keep clearly before us, in the second place, the fact that our obligation to

imitate Jesus is to be interpreted in the light of the fact that our individuality is determinative of our duty. Permit me to make clear what I mean by this inasmuch as it carries with it the notion that there are some respects in which it is not to be supposed that we are under obligation to imitate Jesus. By my individuality I mean that which distinguishes *me* from *you*. No two of us are exactly alike either as regards our opportunities or as regards our natural or acquired abilities. As a result no two of us have exactly the same duties to perform. Your duties are not the same as John Smith's, any more than John Smith's are the same as yours and that because your individualities differ. It is evident, therefore, that we ought not to imitate one of our fellows in the sense of doing just as He does. It is equally true, however, that this holds good as regards our obligation to imitate Jesus Christ. In as far as He differed from us by nature and endowments and in as far as His mission in this world differed from ours—to that extent we are under no obligation to imitate Him. Jesus was divine; we are not. Jesus came to redeem this world; that is not one of our functions. Jesus spoke with authority; we have no right to assume the same tone. Jesus demanded that men

obey Him as Lord and that they worship Him as God; it would be blasphemous for us to make the same demands. All this goes to show that as regards much of His life it is absurd to suppose that we can imitate Him. Strictly speaking, it is not ever proper to ask—What would Jesus do if He was in our situation? The question that each one of us should put is rather this—What ought I, located as I am, in view of my gifts and opportunities, what ought I to do in order that I may exemplify in my life the principles that Jesus exemplified in His life?

If we keep a firm hold on these two thoughts, *viz.*: that our imitation of Jesus should be according to the spirit rather than according to the letter, and that our obligation to imitate Jesus is to be interpreted in the light of the fact that duty is individual and so not the same for any two persons, I think that we will not only be kept from seriously misinterpreting our duty at this point but perceive at the same time that the imitation of Jesus is not so impracticable a thing as is sometimes supposed.

Thus far I have assumed that in Jesus we have an adequate model for us and for all men, that only as that model is, in a living manner, reproduced in our own lives can we be said to be and do what we ought to be and do. I sup-

pose that this notion is shared by most, if not by all, of those before me. It must be confessed, however, that there are those who take issue with us on this point and who maintain that the highest type of man is other than was Jesus Christ and hence that we ought not to take Him as our model.

It ought not, indeed, to surprise us that there should be an increasing number in these days who deny the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. It would be strange if it were otherwise in view of some of the tendencies of our age. Nothing more miraculous has been reported in connection with Jesus than His sinlessness. Such a fact refuses as absolutely to fit into a naturalistic scheme of evolution as does His resurrection from the dead. Either, therefore, Jesus was not sinless or Naturalism affords an inadequate account of this world's phenomena. It is only a lack of consistency, therefore, or shall we say of courage, that accounts for the fact that there are any, among those who accept Naturalism as the ultimate word in philosophy and science, who admit the sinlessness of Jesus.

We are concerned just now, however, not so much with those who deny the utter sinlessness of Jesus as with those who reject Him as their moral ideal. We cannot, indeed, question the

sinlessness of Jesus and still assign Him the place He holds in the Christian religion, but, of course, we can question His sinlessness and still maintain that He is the fairest and noblest of the children of men. At least men have so held, and while such a theory may fit the facts very poorly no such inherent contradiction is involved as in the case of those just mentioned. Not even this much, however, is allowed by all. There are not lacking those who deny that Jesus is fitted to serve as a moral ideal for the modern world.

In most cases, no doubt, this rejection of Jesus as a moral ideal is rooted in a misunderstanding. There are those who have been led to suppose that Jesus was an ascetic, one who looked upon the joys and activities of this world as evil in themselves, and hence as things to be shunned. And because such a life does not appeal to them, because they are convinced that it is both their duty and their privilege to take an active interest in art, literature, society, business, politics and such like, they have been led to suppose that Jesus was not the sort of man they ought to be. It is evident that these have been misled. Jesus was not the sort of man that they suppose. There was indeed an ascetic element in His character as there is in

every noble character but He was far from being an ascetic. To Him, with all its sin, this world was but one room in the Father's house, and what He desired for His disciples was not that they should be taken out of the world but only that they should be kept from the evil that is in the world. The example of Jesus calls not for separation from the world but only from that which is evil in the world.

Or again there are those who have been led to suppose that Jesus was too negative, not sufficiently positive, to afford an adequate model for the modern man. They have been led to see in Jesus a sort of goody-goody, one, who while markedly innocent of evil, was lacking in strength and ruggedness of character. And because that sort of man does not appeal to them, they too have been led to suppose that Jesus was not the sort of man they ought to be. I can only wonder whether these have ever read the New Testament. Certainly that is not the impression Jesus made on the early disciples. It is true that they were impressed by His sinlessness, but it is even more true that they were impressed by the force and virility of His character. Have you never noticed how frequently the words "power" and "authority" are used in connection with Jesus



by the early disciples? Would such words have been employed so frequently if Jesus had been lacking in force of character? Moreover, we may be sure that if Jesus had been a weakling He would never have become the dominating influence in the life of our Western world. With what warrant can we speak of Him as lacking in force of character, of whom Jean Paul Richter could truthfully say, "With His pierced hand He lifted empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channels and by His spirit still governs the ages." I am sure we cannot read the Gospels with care and insight without agreeing with Prof. Francis G. Peabody when he writes: "Jesus is no gentle visionary, no contemplative saint, no Lamb of God, except in the experience of suffering; He is a Person whose dominating trait is force, the scourger of the traders, the defier of the Pharisees, the commanding Personality whose words are with the authority of power. Women, it is true, were drawn with peculiar loyalty to the service of Jesus, and it has been inferred from such feminine devotion that the character of Jesus must have had in it more of the womanly than the masculine. Quite the contrary inference would be indicated by the ordinary relationships between women and men. It



is not feminine traits in men that attract women, but masculine qualities of force, initiative, and leadership. Gracious consideration for women marked indeed the thought of Jesus, from the time when He went down to Nazareth and was subject to his mother, to the day when he commended his mother to the disciple whom he loved; but for softness and sentimentality, such as characterizes the feminine man, there was no room in his rugged, nomadic, homeless life." (*Jesus Christ and the Christian Character*, pages 53-54.)

No doubt there are those whose rejection of Jesus as a moral ideal does not rest on misunderstanding. Their rejection is based on a positive lack of sympathy with the Christian ideal. It may seem to us that to know Jesus is to admire Him, but that does not always prove true. Humility and self-sacrifice and forgiveness, even when combined with strength and courage and fidelity to duty, do not appeal to all. I suppose that there is an element of misunderstanding in every rejection of Jesus as a moral ideal, and yet unquestionably there is a rejection of Jesus that is too fundamental to rest on mere misunderstanding. Witness, for instance, that of Nietzsche and his followers. There are those, moreover, who never heard of

Nietzsche whose attitude toward Jesus finds its explanation in the words of John's Gospel, "The light is come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light." For the most part, however, I am sure that where we find men rejecting Jesus as an adequate model of what they should be and do, it is because they do not conceive of Jesus as He really was.

Let me remind you, in concluding, that in this demand that we be like Christ we have a prophecy of the time when we shall be like Him. No doubt if we saw in Jesus only our example we would not have the courage to believe that this prophecy would ever be realized in ourselves. Then as we looked upon Him and saw His perfection we could but cry out that the example is too high for us, that we cannot attain unto it. Because He is our life as well as our example, however, we have the courage to make our own the words of John and say, "Now are we the children of God and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him." There is perhaps but little in our lives now that suggests Jesus Christ; none the less the day is coming when we shall be like Him. To

doubt this is to doubt Him “who gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works.”



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## CHAPTER SIX: JESUS AS A PREACHER

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And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes.

—*Matthew vii: 28, 29.*

## VI

### JESUS AS A PREACHER

I AM going to speak this afternoon concerning Jesus as a Preacher. Much of His activity on earth was spent in this rôle. From the very beginning to the very close of His ministry we find Him preaching and teaching. At times we find Him preaching in the synagogues. More frequently we find Him preaching in the open air, in the streets, on some mountain slope, from a boat on the lake—or in some private house. Again, at times, we find Him preaching to large crowds and so acting the rôle of a popular preacher. More frequently, however, we find Him speaking to smaller groups, to His immediate disciples, to those who led the opposition against Him, or even to individuals as in the case of Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria.

Moreover, as a preacher, Jesus was a great success—if success in this rôle is to be measured by the attention one receives. No doubt

in the case of Jesus it is difficult to say just how much of the attention He attracted was due to His preaching and how much to the miracles He wrought; but unquestionably His preaching was of a sort to attract attention apart from any exhibition of miraculous power. There was that about the man himself that caught and held the attention of men. He spoke by virtue of that which He was. Moreover, there was a freshness, a directness, a simplicity, an earnestness about His speech that secured attention no less than the importance of what He said. We do not find, however, that Jesus attached any special significance to His popularity as a preacher. He perceived that most of those who thronged Him took but a superficial interest in Him and His work, and so, as His ministry advanced, we find Him placing less and less emphasis upon His work with the multitude and more and more upon His work with His more immediate disciples. None the less from first to last He remained a preacher, *i. e.*, one who placed his dependence on oral instruction. He never became an author and thus endeavored to give permanence to His thoughts by committing them to writing. Had His disciples not treasured up His utterances they would long ago have passed into that oblivion



that is the fate of all merely spoken words. As it is we, of course, have nothing like a complete report of His utterances, though no doubt we may well believe that the Gospels contain the essence, as it were, the gist of that which He said. All the words of Jesus that we possess, if separated from the narrative that they accompany, could be printed on a few pages and read in an hour; and yet insignificant as they are as regards number they have proven to be the most living, the most potent, the most far-reaching in their influence of all the words that have ever been spoken.

When we consider the large place that preaching and teaching occupied in the life of Jesus; and when we consider, moreover, that He commanded His disciples to go and preach, we cannot fail to see how little warrant there is for supposing that Christianity disparages the intellect. If Jesus had cherished any doubts as to the essential rationality of that which He stood for, we may be sure He would not have placed so much emphasis on preaching, on that which in the nature of the case is effective only as it appeals to the reason and intelligence of men. If Jesus and His disciples had placed the emphasis on matters of ritual and ceremony; if they had manifested more interest in sym-

bolism than in knowledge, we might be warranted in saying that they made their appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect: but when we note that they ever place the emphasis on preaching and teaching, and when we note that they call upon their hearers to judge for themselves as to the truth of what they said—witness the Master's words, "And why even of yourselves judge ye not that which is right?" as well as Paul's words, "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."—it is evident that they made their appeal primarily to the intellect. We are not, indeed, to suppose that they were intellectualists in the sense that they supposed that ignorance is at the root of all our troubles and that men stand in need of nothing except knowledge. They were well aware that men need more than knowledge, that above all they need a Saviour both from the guilt and the power of sin. They perceived also that rational assent does not make a man a Christian, and yet they did not suppose that reasonable beings would embrace Christianity as long as they withheld their rational assent. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," said the apostle; but he did not suppose that reasonable beings would put their trust in Jesus unless they had adequate reasons for

supposing that Jesus was worthy of their trust and able to save those who put their trust in Him.

We are not to suppose, therefore, that the emphasis that Christ and His Apostles placed on faith involved any mistrust of the reason: rather we should suppose that the fact that we are saved by faith implies that we should be addressed as rational beings. No doubt faith and knowledge are frequently contrasted as though what we knew we did not believe and what we believed we did not know. Such a contrast, however, is wholly unwarranted. So far is it from being true that knowledge is the contrary of faith that it is rather true that it is the correlative of faith. Christlieb's dictum is wholly true: "He who believes nothing knows nothing." I cannot even have knowledge of my own existence without the exercise of faith. The fallacy in Descartes' famous argument, "I know therefore I am," has often been pointed out. When I say "*I know*" I have already assumed the existence of what I am trying to prove, *viz.*: my own existence. It is equally true that I can have no knowledge of others unless I exercise faith. I do not even know of the presence of this audience save as I believe that my faculty of sight conveys to me a correct representa-

tion of what exists outside of me. Moreover, I can reason, I can draw conclusion, from what I observe, only as I exercise faith. Because underlying all reasoning, all inference, are certain axioms, such as every effect must have a cause. I cannot prove these axioms; I can only take them on faith; and yet unless I do, I cannot reason or draw conclusions at all. It goes without saying, therefore, that I can have no knowledge of what I have not observed unless I exercise faith. For here I am dependent upon the testimony of others. Unless I believe what travelers tell me, and unless I believe what others have written in the past, I can have no knowledge of the world as a whole, as it exists to-day, or as it has existed in the past. Is it not evident, then, that faith underlies all knowledge and that he who seeks to eliminate faith from his mental processes is but emulating the wisdom of the man who saws off the limb upon which he himself is sitting? The difference between men is not that some believe while others do not. All men believe. The difference lies in *what* men believe. The Christian, for instance, believes one thing; the non-Christian believes another thing. The question that is constantly at issue has to do with the question whether the Christian or the non-Christian is justified in believ-

ing as he does. All Christianity asks for, from this point of view, is a fair hearing and a just verdict. Otherwise ignorance is the mother of Christian devotion and Christian churches asylums for the feeble-minded. The first charge we bring against the non-Christian is that he is irrational. We believe in Christ because it is the only rational thing to do.

I have pointed out the large place that preaching and teaching occupied in the life of Jesus. It is scarcely possible for us to overestimate the value of His teaching, and yet we are not to suppose that the chief value of Christianity lies in the teaching of Jesus. The value of Christianity hinges not so much on what Jesus said as upon what He was and did. Were it not for what He said we would, indeed, be walking in moral and spiritual darkness, and yet what would the moral and spiritual illumination that has its source in Jesus profit us were it not for that which He did in our behalf as well as that which He is unto us? Jesus is indeed our teacher, beyond compare, but His chief value lies in the fact that He is our Saviour from the guilt and power of sin. Moreover, valuable as is the teaching of Jesus, if it stood alone we would be at a loss to account for the rise and influence of the Christian re-

ligion. As Prof. Fairbairn said: "If anything is certain, it is this: the teaching of Jesus, however its qualities may be described or appraised, can never by itself explain the power of Christ, the reign, the diffusion, the continuance, and the achievements of the Christian religion. And these are the things which stand in need of explanation; not simply what Jesus thought and why He thought but why men came to think concerning Him as to create the religion which bears His name." (*The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 304.) To account for the rise and influence of the Christian religion we must not, of course, neglect the teaching of Jesus, but we must throw the emphasis upon the sovereign personality who gave expression to these utterances and the saving work which He came to do. It was that which Jesus did rather than that which Jesus said that attached, and that still attaches, men to Him with a bond stronger than death. Moreover Jesus is not simply one of "Those dead but sceptered Sovereigns who still rule our spirits from their urns." He not only was, He is; and we can account for the rise and influence of the Christian religion only as we recognize that His sovereign personality has been energizing in the life of our world through all the Christian centuries.

In this connection it may be well to say a word concerning Christ's originality as a teacher. Some have thought it necessary to maintain that He was wholly original in His teaching in the sense that no real parallels to His utterances can be found among the teachers that preceded Him. Such a position is untenable. Unquestionably there was much that was new in the teachings of Jesus. It was not without cause that the people questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? a new teaching!" and yet this is not to be interpreted as meaning that all His teaching was new. Jesus never claimed that He was wholly novel in His teaching. To Him the Old Testament contained an authoritative revelation of God's will of which not one jot or tittle would fail of realization. It was to be expected, therefore, that there would be a close similarity, in many respects, between the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the Old Testament. It was to be expected, also, that there would be notable resemblances between the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the Jewish rabbis as these drew their thoughts in large degree from the well of Old Testament truth. Not only that, there is nothing surprising in the fact that parallels to many of Christ's most charac-



teristic utterances are to be found in the teachings of Buddha, Confucius and others. If Jesus was, as we believe, not only the Son of that God who created and who watches over all the peoples of the earth, but also the universal man—the one man to whom there attaches none of the limitations of race or age—ought we not to look for a close resemblance between His utterances and the best and noblest to which others have given expressions?

We are not to suppose, then, that Jesus was wholly new in all His utterances or that the value of His teaching hinges in any way on its *dissimilarity* with the utterances of others. Jesus was unique as a teacher not so much because of His originality as because of His total avoidance of all that is trivial or erroneous. Others taught much truth, but with them the truth is mixed with much that is trivial and erroneous. In Jesus, however, we not only have the truth; we have nothing but the truth.

I have yet to mention the most significant fact in connection with the teaching of Jesus. I refer to the authority with which He spoke. It was this that first of all impressed His hearers. "The multitudes—we read—were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."



They were not especially impressed by the appeal He made to their reason because in this He only did what their own teachers—what in fact all teachers—do. They were more impressed by the originality of His teaching because much that He said sounded strange and unusual, and yet what He said was not wholly different from what their own teachers had told them. That which impressed them most of all was the authority with which He spoke, because in this respect He stood in such striking contrast to the scribes and pharisees. The scribes and the pharisees were constantly citing the opinions of others in support of their statements. Jesus spoke as One who is himself the source of truth, as One who has an intuitive grasp on the kingdom of truth, so that He does not hesitate to say: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

Now we may ask in all reverence—what right had Jesus to speak in this authoritative tone not only to the men of His own age but for the men of all ages? Why should we regard anything as true simply because He said it was true? Why may we not demand of Him just as we demand of every other, that He, in every instance, support His statements with arguments in order that we may be in a position to

decide for ourselves whether we agree with Him? Jesus, for example, laid down certain regulations in regard to marriage and divorce. There are many who do not agree with Him on these matters; and moreover they support their positions with a wealth of learning that is quite lacking in the teaching of Jesus. Why, it may be asked, should we accept the view of Jesus on these matters rather than that of not a few learned scholars? I reply that our answer to this question—and questions such as this—turns and ever must turn upon our conception of His personality. If Jesus was a man and nothing but a man, if He did not differ essentially from the rest of us, then I am ready to confess that nothing that He said is binding on my conscience; and that I am not under obligation to accept anything as true simply because He said it was true. In that case I would no doubt be warranted in classing Jesus with Buddha, Confucius, Plato, Emerson and others, *i. e.*, as one of earth's wisest and most influential teachers; but I would not be warranted in supposing that His teaching is free from the alloy of error. If, however, Jesus was the person He claimed to be and that the Church as a whole believes Him to be, *viz.*: the Word incarnate, then He is One whose rank in the scale

of being gives Him a right to speak to us in this authoritative tone, and we are only showing ordinary common sense when as we stand in His presence we say, "Thy word is truth and the opening of Thy lips to me is wisdom."

No doubt there are those who hold it unreasonable to accept anything as true simply on the authority of another. It is difficult, however, to see the force of this contention. Surely it is reasonable that we should adjust ourselves to what actually is. If Jesus merely presumes to exercise an authority that does not rightly belong to Him, then, of course, we ought not to attach any such special significance to His utterances; but if He is really one who speaks with authority, we cannot be said to be acting reasonably if we deal with His utterances as we do with the utterances of others.

In conclusion let us remind ourselves that it is because of what Jesus was and is that His words have a normative value for all time. Jesus being what He is we may be sure that His words will never be outgrown, that as the race progresses in wisdom it will not grow away from but toward a more adequate appreciation of the wisdom embodied in His words; and hence that amid the jangling and discordant voices of earth's teachers there is one voice

that is always to be taken at its face value, one voice that amid all the changes of time remains infallible amid the fallible and unchangeable amid the changeable.

More especially let us remember that in all His utterances Jesus was inspired by an ethical and religious purpose. It will profit us nothing to know the truth as Jesus proclaimed it unless we put it into practice, unless we translate it into conduct. The utterance that stands at the close of the Sermon on the Mount is to be read in connection with all His utterances: "Every one, therefore, that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."

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## CHAPTER SEVEN: JESUS AS A MIRACLE WORKER

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For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.

—*John iii: 16.*

## VII

### JESUS AS A MIRACLE WORKER

**I**T lies upon the surface of the New Testament narrative that miracles played a large part in the public ministry of Jesus. It is true that only thirty of forty miracles—including the miracles of healing—are recorded in the Gospels. There is, however, frequent mention of general manifestations of miraculous power so that the impression one receives, as he reads the Gospels, is that the miracles recorded are but specimens of the large number performed. Just as we have nothing like a complete record of our Lord's words, so we have nothing like a complete record of His deeds.

Now it is this element in the life of Jesus to which exception is most frequently made. There are those to whom it is axiomatic that miracles never happened. It is inevitable that such should pass an unfavorable judgment on the trustworthiness of the Gospels. Prof. Foster

of the University of Chicago even goes so far as to say that a man cannot be intellectually honest and at the same time believe in miracles. Few are so brutal in their choice of expression, and yet unquestionably we live in an age that is extremely hostile to the miraculous. Everywhere we find those who openly profess their disbelief in miracles, those who apparently think that such a profession is one of the hall-marks of culture. And even where belief in the miraculous is retained, its significance is often minimized as much as possible. Probably there never was an age in which the thinking of the more or less educated classes was more deeply tinged with an anti-miraculous spirit than the one in which we are living; and hence never an age in which Christian men and women were more strongly tempted to surrender their confession at this point.

As a result there have been many efforts to commend to us a non-miraculous Christianity. These range all the way from the efforts of scholars like Pfleiderer and Bousset to novelists like Mrs. Humphry Ward in *Robert Elsmere*, and Mr. Winston Churchill in *The Inside of the Cup*. No doubt, immersed as we are in an anti-miraculous age, we cannot but feel a certain sympathy for these efforts;



and yet if the question be put, Have these efforts proven successful? it must be confessed that they have ended in failure. This does not find its explanation in the weakness of their advocates. Scholars of the highest rank have attempted to discredit miracles. It finds its explanation rather in the fact that in attempting to give us a non-miraculous Christianity they have been attempting the impossible. And that because as regards Christianity the choice is not between a miraculous and a non-miraculous Christianity, but between a miraculous Christianity and no Christianity at all.

That as regards Christianity the choice is between a miraculous Christianity and no Christianity at all appears, in the first place, when we consider how inextricably the miraculous is woven into the New Testament narrative. Miracles do not simply occur here and there; they enter into the very warp and woof of the narrative, so that it is impossible to eliminate the miraculous and leave anything that is worthy of our attention behind. It is only necessary to read the Gospels and note how the miraculous is everywhere involved, to perceive how true this is. You might as well attempt to dig out every other stone in a stone house and still expect the house to stand and serve its purpose as

attempt to eliminate the miraculous from the New Testament narratives and still expect to have a satisfying remainder left.

That as regards Christianity the choice is between a miraculous Christianity and no Christianity at all appears most clearly, however, when we consider that we cannot eliminate the miraculous without eliminating Jesus himself. Jesus himself is the greatest of all miracles, and yet Jesus stands at the center of the Christian religion and makes it what it is. How is it possible, then, to eliminate the miraculous and still retain Christianity? You might as well suppose that you could eliminate the Pope without destroying Roman Catholicism; in fact you might as well suppose that you could eliminate the sun from the heavens without disturbing our solar system as suppose that you can eliminate Jesus Christ from Christianity and still suppose that what is left behind can honestly be called Christianity. No doubt we might still call what was left behind after Jesus was eliminated by the name of Christianity, but it would be something *other* than Christianity, and hence something that in common honestly we ought to call by another name.

We are not to imagine, therefore, that miracles are a mere appendage to Christianity.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Miracles enter into the very substance of Christianity, so that Christianity without its miracles would not be Christianity at all.

I would not be understood, of course, as saying that every miracle recorded in the Scriptures is essential to Christianity. Many of them might conceivably be eliminated and Christianity remain essentially what it is. I would not be understood, for instance, as saying that Christianity stands or falls with the question whether the sun stood still at the command of Joshua or whether Jonah was swallowed by a whale or whether Lazarus was raised from the dead. These, as well as many other miracles recorded in the Scriptures, might conceivably be eliminated and Christianity remain essentially what it is. What I would be understood as saying is that there are miracles that are essential to the very existence of Christianity, miracles the elimination of which would leave Christianity a mass of crumbling ruins. I refer especially to such miracles as the incarnation, the atonement and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. By no stretch of the imagination can such miracles be classed as non-essential. They enter into the very substance of the Christian religion; they are vital to its

very existence. Hence when we have such miracles in mind it is perfectly proper to say—Christianity denuded of its miracles is Christianity extinct.

No doubt we are constantly told, not only in the writings of the learned but also in the pages of our novels, our magazines and our newspapers, that miracles are the one great obstacle that keeps our modern world from accepting Christianity; and that the Church must preach a non-miraculous Christianity if it would win our modern world. I do not believe that such is the case; and even if I did I would not preach other than a miraculous Christianity; and that because to me it is a matter of comparative indifference whether or no men accept Christianity, unless the Christianity that they accept be a miraculous Christianity. No doubt those who commend to us a non-miraculous Christianity commend to us much that is attractive, much that is worthy of our attention, and yet the Christianity that they preach does not differ essentially from what has been preached or what is being preached under the auspices of non-Christian religions. What is it that places Christianity in a place by itself among the religions of the world, if not this—that it brings us the knowledge of a divine-human Saviour

who is able to save those who put their trust in Him? In view of the fact that this divine-human Saviour is the greatest of all miracles, it is evident that we must eviscerate Christianity of that which gives it its unique value before we can present it in a non-miraculous form. After all, it is only as we see in Christianity the one religion that brings us the knowledge of a Saviour who is able to save and does save those who put their trust in Him, that it becomes a matter of very great moment whether we are Christians or non-Christians. If we must evacuate Christianity of all that makes it worth while before we can so preach it that it will commend itself to our modern world, then it seems to me, at least, that one might be more profitably employed than in the preaching of Christianity.

Just here it may be in place to say a word concerning the question, Wherein does the offense of the miraculous lie? Why is it that men are so anxious to eliminate the miraculous from their thoughts? Many would have us believe that this hostility to miracles has its roots in the scientific progress of the last hundred years or so, as a result of which an immovable conviction of the "uniformity of nature" has been fixed in men's minds. Now it is quite certain

that miracles are not opposed to our conviction of the "uniformity of nature" in as far as that conviction is based on an induction from facts. I am not concerned to deny, of course, that in individual cases this consideration does afford a more or less adequate explanation of their rejection of miracles. This consideration must not indeed be overlooked if we would explain why the thinking of our age is so deeply tinged with an anti-miraculous spirit. Nevertheless it is evident that, broadly speaking, this consideration goes but a short way toward accounting for men's hostility to miracles. If the scientific progress of the last century accounts for men's hostility to the miraculous, we would expect to find that throughout the preceding centuries men took no special offense at the miracles of the Bible. We do not find, however, that such was the case. The rationalism of the eighteenth century did not possess our scientific attainments, and yet it attempted as strenuously as do the men of this generation to explain the miracles of the Bible as the result of "natural causes." Even if we go back much further—to the New Testament age itself, an age that was still more backward from the standpoint of modern scientific progress—we find that Festus and the Athenians

were quite as ready to discredit the fact of the resurrection as are our moderns; and that the Jews, who, of course, did not possess our present-day conviction of the "uniformity of nature," took as much offense at the miracles of Jesus as do the men of this age and generation. Wherein then, it may be asked, does the offense of the miraculous really lie? I am sure that the real offense of the miracle lies in the fact that it is an event that posits God as its only adequate explanation, and so an event that thrusts God, as it were, directly on the attention of men. It may seem strange, but it is none the less a fact, that men do not like to retain God in their knowledge. They do not object to admitting that God exists as long as it is confessed that He acts always and only through general laws; for in that case these "general laws" stand between the individual and God and more or less effectively blunt their consciousness of God as a living reality to whom they are personally responsible. They do object, however, to admitting that God acts in a miraculous manner; and that because a miracle, being an event that posits the direct activity of God as its only adequate explanation, obtrudes God, directly and immediately, upon their attention.



If this be the true explanation of the world's offense at the miraculous, to conciliate the world, it is not enough that we preach a non-miraculous religion; it is necessary that we preach a religion that does not obtrude God too directly on the attention of men. A religion, however, that removes God to some distant sphere or that permits Him to act only in accordance with general laws, is a religion of such small significance that it cannot be a matter of much moment whether or no men profess it.

It would appear, therefore, that we have everything to lose and nothing to gain by preaching a non-miraculous Christianity. Even if we should succeed in winning the world to such a Christianity nothing much would be gained, as I have already intimated; and yet there is joy among the angels of heaven when one sinner turns from his sin and puts his trust in that miraculous Christ who is able to save unto the uttermost. I do not think, therefore, that it is the part of wisdom to attempt to denude Christianity of its miracles so as to bring it into accord with the prevailing world-view; I think, rather, that it becomes us, as best we may, to attempt to bring the conceptions of our age into harmony with those of Christ and His Apostles.



I have pointed out the place that miracles played in the life of Jesus as well as the anti-miraculous character of the thought-tendencies of our age and the consequent efforts that have been made to give us a non-miraculous Christianity. I have also pointed out that all these efforts suffer shipwreck on the fact that miracles enter so deeply into the substance of Christianity that our only choice is between a miraculous Christianity and no Christianity at all; and hence that it is foolish to try to make it acceptable to those who stumble at the miraculous by evacuating it of all that makes it worthy of their attention. In all that I have said I have spoken, it needs scarcely be said, from the viewpoint of one who believes that the miracles recorded in the Scriptures actually took place. It is beside my purpose, however, to attempt to justify this belief—except to this extent. If it be true, as I have endeavored to make clear, that miracles enter into the very substance of Christianity, so that Christianity without its miracles would not be Christianity at all, then it is evident that the whole mass of that evidence that goes to prove the truth of Christianity is available at the same time to prove the reality of the miraculous in history. Those who have even a slight acquaintance with

the evidence that gives us Christianity will perceive the significance of this consideration.

But while it is beside my purpose to seek to justify this belief in the miraculous further than to direct your attention to the consideration just mentioned—a consideration whose importance it is difficult to overestimate—yet I do want to say a word concerning the alleged presumption against the miraculous that weighs so heavily with many. It is generally admitted that the evidence for the miraculous is strong, so strong that if it was advanced in favor of an ordinary event no one would hesitate to admit its sufficiency. How could it be otherwise when, as I have just pointed out, the whole mass of the evidence that can be advanced in behalf of Christianity can also be advanced in favor of the miraculous? And yet there are those who seem to think that the presumption against the miraculous is so overwhelming that it is impossible to conceive evidence strong enough to warrant belief in its reality. Is this presumption against the miraculous warranted? I am sure that it is not, and not only that—I am sure that we need but look at the facts of life as a whole to perceive that the presumption is really in favor of the miraculous. No doubt if we confine our attention exclusively to

the physical, to nature in its narrow sense, we will feel that the presumption against the miraculous is almost overwhelming. I am sure, however, that if we broaden our outlook so as to include the moral and spiritual the matter will assume a different aspect. Even then, we must keep clearly before us the fact that the miracles of Christianity are not isolated prodigies for whose occurrence no good reason can be given. On the contrary the miracles of Christianity are organically united. Taken together they form a system that finds its center in the great fact of redemption and so a system that finds its center in Christ himself. To perceive this is to perceive that the question whether the presumption is for or against the miraculous is one with the question whether God has intervened for the salvation of His people. And this in turn hinges upon the moral and spiritual condition of mankind. If the human race is in a normal condition, morally and spiritually, then no doubt the presumption against the notion that God has intervened for our redemption is overwhelming, for in that case there would have been no occasion for such an act on His part. But if the human race is in an abnormal condition, morally and spiritually, if it has gone wrong, so seriously wrong

that left to itself its condition is hopeless, then I am sure that the presumption is in favor of the view that God will put forth His hand for the salvation of this world, *i. e.*, in favor of the miraculous, since such an act on His part would, be, in the nature of the case, miraculous.

In concluding let me emphasize the fact that the question whether miracles have occurred is one with the question whether God so loved this world as to give His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish but have everlasting life. To scoff at the miraculous, therefore, is to scoff at the reality of redemption. If miracles never happened, the statement of John iii:16 is a delusion. If they have happened, we may be sure that they happened in connection with God's redemption of His people; and hence that the way is open for us to see in Jesus our Saviour and so the basis of our hope both for time and for eternity.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT: JESUS AS A HEALER

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And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages \* \* \*  
healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.  
—*Matthew ix: 35.*

## VIII

### JESUS AS A HEALER

**M**OST of the miracles ascribed to Jesus are miracles of healing. There is a sense in which these miracles of healing may be spoken of as non-essential. In saying this I do not mean to disparage their significance. I merely mean to say that they do not so enter into the substance of Christianity that apart from them we would have no Christianity at all, that conceivably we might eliminate these miracles of healing and yet rightly call what remains by the name of Christianity. It should not be supposed, however, that they differ in this respect from the nature miracles ascribed to Jesus, such as the stilling of the tempest and the feeding of the multitudes. These also might be eliminated and that which is most essential to the Christian religion still remain.

It ought to be evident to all that both the miracles of healing and the nature miracles per-

formed by Jesus sustain a less vital relation to the Christian religion than does Jesus himself. This appears most clearly when we remind ourselves that the peculiarity of the Christian religion lies in the person of Jesus, in the fact that He is not the subject but the object of religion. Unquestionably Jesus revealed himself through these works and from this point of view they are possessed of abiding significance. Apart from this, however, their significance was for the most part but temporary. Considered by itself it is a matter of comparatively small moment that some nineteen hundred years ago Jesus cured and fed a multitude of people. Even if He had not done that, the history of the world might have been essentially the same as it has been. How different it is as regards those great miracles that center in Jesus himself, such as the incarnation and the atonement and the resurrection! Such miracles do not simply reveal Jesus; apart from them there would be no such person as Jesus. We could not leave them out of consideration without leaving Jesus himself out of consideration. They are essential miracles, therefore, in the strict sense of the word, since apart from them Christianity is inconceivable.

The modern world is comparatively friendly



toward the miracles of healing ascribed to Jesus. No doubt this finds its explanation in part in what has just been said. It perceives that less is at stake; that the acceptance or rejection of the miracles of healing does not necessarily carry with it the acceptance or rejection of the Christian view of life and the world. This does not mean, however, that modern unbelievers admit these miracles of healing; it merely means that their attack is so concentrated on the chief citadel as to make them more or less indifferent to the outposts. This consideration does not of itself, therefore, suffice to explain the attitude toward these miracles that is assumed by many of those who reject evangelical Christianity. Of itself it only explains why some of the opponents of Christianity have but little to say about these miracles of healing. It does not of itself explain why any who reject evangelical Christianity should assume a positively friendly attitude toward the cures ascribed to Jesus. It is with such that we are more especially concerned.

Among those who reject evangelical Christianity and yet are friendly toward the cures wrought by Jesus are to be mentioned, in the first place, those who wholly reject the miraculous and yet are friendly toward these alleged

cures because they think they can be explained naturally. These reject the nature-miracles, such as the feeding of the five thousand, the stilling of the tempest and the raising of the dead on the ground that they involve the strictly miraculous; but they accept the cures ascribed to our Lord on the ground that they can be explained naturally. Bousset, one of the leading exponents of a non-miraculous Christianity, affords a good illustration of this. Perhaps I cannot do better, in this connection, than quote his words: "Jesus' method of healing may be called a psychical one; He stirred the forces of the inner life so powerfully that they reacted upon the outward bodily life. He healed the sick by His immovable faith in His heavenly Father and the divine force working in Him, and by awakening in the maimed and suffering the same faith in Himself as the messenger of God. Thus His healing activity lies entirely within the bounds of what is psychologically conceivable, and this feature of the life of Jesus has nothing absolutely unique about it. The history of religion offers countless analogies to it down to the most recent times: we need only mention the cases of astonishing and undeniable healing which attended the pilgrimages to Lourdes, or the miracle—and

prayer healings of Blumhardt in Bad Boll. In these cases modern science speaks of the remarkable phenomena of suggestion, auto-suggestion, and hypnotism; and in view of these analogies it will at any rate be well to draw the limits of the possible very widely with regard to our Gospel stories. We have to consider the peculiarly powerful impression which the person of Jesus was in a position to make, the almost incalculable force of the people's confidence in this ever-successful doctor, and the childishness and *naïveté* of the population, which as yet made no speculations as to the limits of the possible and entertained no suspicion of the miraculous, and could therefore attain to the very verge of what was possible by the mere force of its confidence." (*Jesus*, p. 48).

According to those for whom Bousset speaks the deeds of healing wrought by Jesus do not differ essentially from those that are wrought by modern physicians or in connection with religious pilgrimages. So interpreted the cures of Jesus fit readily into their naturalistic philosophy. They feel perfectly free, therefore, to say that miracles do not happen and at the same time to admit the reality of Jesus' cures.

Now I would ask you to note, in the first

place, that there is no real parallel between the cures wrought by Jesus and those with whom these writers seek to compare them. No doubt there is some resemblance between them; but it falls far short of identity. Hence the recognition of these other deeds of healing as coming within the possibilities of nature still leaves those wrought by Jesus unexplained. Again even if this resemblance approached identity—which it does not—this friendly attitude toward these cures, combined with a hostile attitude toward the nature-miracles, could not be justified. And that because, no matter what critical view of the composition of the Gospels we may accept, the evidence that Jesus wrought cures is no stronger than the evidence that He wrought nature-miracles, such as the feeding of the five thousand and the raising of the dead. Hence there is no warrant on historical grounds for accepting the one while rejecting the other.

Among those who reject evangelical Christianity and yet who are friendly to the cures wrought by Jesus there remains to be mentioned—the Christian Scientists. Some may question my right to class Christian Scientists among the enemies of evangelical Christianity, but surely a system that affirms that the Bible

is "full of thousands of errors" but that *Science and Health* is "truth without mixture of human error," that denies the personality of God and affirms that He is only a Principle, that denies the fact of sin and so the reality of that atonement that was wrought by Jesus Christ, that denies an actual incarnation and so even the reality of Christ's person, while it may conceivably be something better than evangelical Christianity is certainly something *other* than evangelical Christianity. Hence if there be those who cling to both, it is only because they affirm with one breath what they deny with the next. They will no more mix than will oil and water; and hence the logic of the situation clearly demands that we be one or the other. Those who seek to be both are in a state of unstable equilibrium from which they can be saved only by giving up their Christian Science, or by forsaking evangelical Christianity.

There is no need of me reminding you that Christian Scientists are friendly toward the cures wrought by Jesus, including His raising of the dead. They place the chief emphasis on this phase of His ministry and think it strange that any should ascribe to them a place of subordinate importance. And yet, of course, their

motive in this is quite different from that of those we have considered. Those whom we have considered look upon this world with its evils and its diseases and its deaths as the natural order of things, and they accept the cures of Jesus because they think they find their place in this natural order of things; while they reject the nature-miracles because they think them out of harmony with this natural order of things. The Christian Scientists, however, look upon this world with its evils and diseases and deaths as unnatural, as out of harmony with the real order of things; and they look with such favor upon the cures wrought by Jesus, including His raising of the dead, because they see in this the one element in His life that was most in harmony with the real order of things. They do not simply mean by this that the natural order of things has been distorted, rendered inharmonious, through sin's entrance. Such a view would be in full accord with the teaching of evangelical Christianity. What they mean is that this so-called natural order of things has no real existence except to wrong thinking; and hence that if mankind would only think rightly, *i. e.*, in harmony with the teachings of Mrs. Eddy this so-called natural order of things with its disease and suffering and

death would disappear and the true order of things be ushered in.

Now while it may not be possible to say just what the therapeutic value of Christian Science is, inasmuch as the alleged cures of organic diseases, so widely advertised, have not been of a nature to satisfy us—and still less the trained physician—that such cures have actually been effected by Christian Science methods, yet I am not concerned to deny the reality of all the cures wrought by Christian Science practitioners. I am concerned to affirm, however, that there is no real parallel between the cures wrought and the method employed by Jesus and the cures wrought and the method employed by Christian Science practitioners; and that no conclusion can fairly be drawn from the reality of the cures wrought by Christian Science practitioners to the truth of Christian Science. We have as good evidence that cures have been wrought by the use of certain patent medicines; and yet that does not lead us to suppose that these patent medicines contain a specific for all, or even for any, of the diseases mentioned in their advertisements.

Neither am I concerned to deny that Christian Science, especially in its emphasis on Quietism, teaches that which our restless, fret-



ful modern world must lay to heart if it would know what peace and tranquillity of soul really are. But I am concerned to affirm that the deepest ground of tranquillity is to be found in the thought that we are beloved of God, that in Christ Jesus He has bestowed upon us the forgiveness of our sins and adopted us as His children, and that no matter what befalls us we are not beyond the reach of His love and care; and hence that a true Quietism can be preached, and has been preached, to better advantage under the auspices of evangelical Christianity than under the auspices of Christian Science.

Moreover, while the Christian Scientists are friendly toward the cures wrought by Jesus from a different motive from that which actuates men like Bousset, essentially the same objections can be urged against their position. In the first place, as I have said, there is no real parallel between the cures effected and the methods employed by Christian Science practitioners and the cures effected and the methods employed by Jesus. Hence that which explains one affords us little or no assistance in explaining the other. Even if we admit the reality of the cures claimed by Christian Scientists we would still have to look elsewhere to account for the cures of Jesus. In the second place,



just as others are not warranted in accepting the cures without accepting all the miracles of Jesus since there is no more historical evidence for the one than for the other; so Christian Scientists are not warranted in accepting the cures without accepting the teaching of Jesus on such subjects as God and man and sin and redemption because the wonderful teachings of Jesus are so interwoven with the wonderful works of Jesus that there is no choice between accepting both and rejecting both. In the third place, they too are dominated by a philosophy that is out of harmony with that of Christ and His apostles. If Bousset and others reject the strictly miraculous because it does not fit into their naturalistic philosophy, it is equally true that the Christian Scientists reject Christ's most characteristic teachings because they do not fit in with their Pantheistic Idealism.

So much for those who accept the "miracles" of healing while rejecting evangelical Christianity. From the standpoint of evangelical Christianity no peculiar difficulty attaches to these miracles of healing, even though they involved the strictly miraculous, as most of them unquestionably did, if the Gospels are trustworthy at all. For those who see in Jesus a divine being who came into this world on a

mission of mercy to sinful men, nothing is more natural than that He should have performed miracles of healing. To them it would have been surprising if He had not performed such miracles.

Perhaps I should say a word as to the peculiar significance that attaches to these miracles of healing. While we might be ignorant of these miracles and yet possess that which is most vital to Christianity, ours would be an inadequate, truncated sort of Christianity. They have a language of their own, a language that we may not wisely neglect. They speak to us, in the first place, of the compassion of Jesus. They tell us, in the second place, that Jesus concerned himself about men's bodies as well as men's souls. I say advisedly men's bodies *as well as* men's souls, for unquestionably His work terminated primarily on men's souls. Witness the words: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" They contain, in the third place, a prophecy of that which awaits the people of God. This world is in an unnatural condition, though in a sense different from what the Christian Scientists suppose. Sin and disease and death have no rightful place in this world. They are not part of the natural, *i. e.*, the right and Divine

order of things. These things, however, will never be eliminated save through Jesus Christ. These miracles of healing speak of the time when all that spells sin and disease and death shall be eliminated and an age ushered in that knows only health and happiness and life.

In conclusion let me remind you that all the miracles of Scripture contain a prophecy of better things. They prove that the power that meets us in nature is not the only power, that there exists another and higher power, a power moreover that makes for righteousness. As Dr. A. Kuyper puts it: "When the existing order of things distresses us, and turns us pessimistic and places nature with its curse over against us and above us, as a power against which all resistance is vain, the miracle proclaims that that power is not the highest, that the heavens of brass above us can be opened, and that there is still another reality, entirely different from this order of things, which does not clash with our moral aspirations, but is in harmony with them. The world, such as it became by the curse, and now is, under the tempering of that curse by common grace, offends the only fixed point which the sinner retains in his moral consciousness, *viz.*: his sense of right. Wrong triumphs again and again, while inno-

cence suffers. Between the hidden life and outward conditions there is no harmony such as our sense of right postulates. It is this problem which presented itself with great force in Israel, and for which no solution is given except in the miracles. The miracles voice a palingenesis which, first in the psychical and after that in the physical world, shall hereafter dissolve all dissonance in entire harmony. Every miracle is a real prophecy of the parousia and the restitution of all things which it introduces. The miracle is the basis of *hope* in that entirely peculiar significance which in Scripture it has with faith and love. It shows that something different is possible, and prophesies that it shall some time be. It is an utterance of that free, divine art by which the supreme Artist, whose work of creation is broken, announces the entire restoration of His original work of art, even in its ideal completion." (*Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, p. 500.)

In the light of this we have impressed upon us, from a different point of view, the indispensableness of miracles not only to evangelical Christianity but to every hopeful outlook on the future.

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## CHAPTER NINE: JESUS AS ONE WHO DIED

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For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture.

—*I Corinthians xv: 3.*

## IX

### JESUS AS ONE WHO DIED

THE object of our faith as Christians is Jesus as He exists to-day. We are not the worshipers of a dead Christ, of One whose body lies moldering under the Syrian skies; we are the worshipers of the living Christ, of One who, clothed in power, is, even now, at the right hand of God. And yet we are the worshipers of One who died not only because this is the only Christ of whom we have any knowledge, but more particularly because the Christ as He exists to-day would have little or no significance for us if the virtue of His death was not perpetuated in His life.

It is, of course, true that everything that Jesus experienced on earth contributed to that significance that He possesses to-day; and yet if we are to single out that in His earthly life that contributed most to that significance that He possesses, unquestionably we must point to His death.

That such is the case is evidenced not only by the teaching of the New Testament but by the teaching of the Church of all ages. When we turn to the Gospels we find that the death of Christ is described with a minuteness that is not paralleled in the narrative of any other event of His life. We find, moreover, that Jesus not only speaks of His death in a way that indicates that He attached a unique importance to it—witness such utterances as these: “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for others.” (Matt. xx:28.) “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep.” (John x:11.) “Verily, verily I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit.” (John xii:24.) “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me” (John xii:32)—we find also that it is the one event in His life that He commanded His disciples to commemorate. (Luke xxii:19.)

When we turn to the Acts and the Epistles we find this same central significance attached to Christ’s death. “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins” (I Cor. xv:3), and “God forbid



that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus" (Gal. vi: 14), writes Paul. "Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God" (I Peter iii: 18), writes Peter. "Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us" (I John iii: 16), writes John. "We see Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor" (Hebrews ii: 9), writes the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We must read their writings as a whole, however, if we would adequately appreciate the place that Christ's death occupied in the thinking of the Apostles. To do this is to realize that Christ's death occupied a place in their thinking that cannot fairly be spoken of as less than central. In fact we cannot read their writings without feeling that there is some warrant for the criticism that the Apostles attached a greater significance to the death of Christ than did the Master himself. And yet in so far as this is true it admits of a natural explanation. We need only remember that Christ came to procure rather than to proclaim blessings; or as Dr. Dale put it, that "Christ came not so much to preach the gospel as that there might be a Gospel to preach." In the nature

of the case the full significance of Christ's death could not be set forth until after that death had been accomplished. It ought not to surprise us, therefore, that the death of Christ occupies a relatively larger place in the teaching of the Apostles than in the teaching of Jesus himself. This is not to say, however, that it occupies a more important place in the teaching of the Apostles than in the teaching of Jesus himself.

Now what was true of the New Testament Church is scarcely less true of the Church of all ages. No important branch of the Christian Church has ever assigned to the death of Christ a place of subordinate importance. Whether we have regard to the writings of their representative theologians, or whether we have regard to the statements of their official creeds, or whether we have regard to the thoughts embodied in their songs and hymns, it is clear that they are all agreed in assigning to the death of Christ a place of central importance. Catholics and Protestants unite in recognizing the cross as the symbol of Christianity, and in singing the praises of the "Lamb that was slain."

I have pointed out that both according to the teaching of the New Testament and the teaching of the Church of all ages it was the death

of Christ that contributed most toward giving Him that significance for us and all men that He possesses. Now what was there about the death of Christ that gives it this unique significance? How must that death be construed in order that we may perceive that the living Christ would have little or no significance for us to-day if the virtue of His death was not perpetuated in His life?

There are those who tell us that we must be content with believing that the death of Jesus contributed largely to the significance that Christ possesses, but that we need have no explanation of the manner in which it does this. Such as these distinguish sharply between "fact" and "theory." We are told that the fact of Christ's death is of supreme importance, but that the theory that explains that fact is of no importance. It is impossible, however, to distinguish as sharply between "fact" and "theory" as these would have us believe. And that because there is no known fact of which we do not have some theory, just as there is no theory, worthy of our attention, to which some fact does not correspond. Whatever plausibility attaches to this distinction is derived from its application to purely physical events, as when we are told that it is the fire that

burns us and not our theory of heat or that it is our food that nourishes us and not any theory we may hold concerning the manner it may do this. When, however, we concern ourselves with facts that appeal to the intelligence, to the emotions, to the conscience, this distinction loses all its plausibility; and we find that facts have significance for us only as they are understood. Hence when we have in mind facts other than those that act in a purely physical way the words of Prof. James Denny are fully warranted: "A fact of which there is absolutely no theory is a fact which stands out of relation to everything in the universe, a fact which has no connection with any part of our experience: it is a blank unintelligibility, a rock in the sky, a mere irrelevance in the mind of man. There is no such thing conceivable as a fact of which there is no theory, or even a fact of which we have no theory; such a thing could not enter our world at all; if there could be such a thing, it would be so far from having the virtue in it to redeem us from sin, that it would have no interest for us and no effect upon us whatever. \* \* \* An absolutely unintelligible fact, to an intelligent being, is exactly equivalent to zero." (*Studies in Theology*, pages 106 and 108.) Now the death of Christ was not a

purely physical fact; neither does it act upon and influence us in a purely physical way. It appeals to the intelligence, to the emotions, to the conscience, and hence it does not and cannot act upon us irrespective of our understanding of it. No doubt we may be genuine Christians while having a very imperfect understanding of this event; but some understanding of it we must have if it is to have any conscious significance for us whatever.

My objection to this distinction between "fact" and "theory," however, is not wholly based on such general considerations; it is based more especially on the fact that this distinction finds no support in the New Testament itself. When we open its pages we have our attention directed not only to the facts that lie at the basis of the Christian religion but to an interpretation of those facts. We discover, moreover, that the writers of the New Testament no more find the essence of Christianity in the facts that lie at its basis than in the interpretation they place on those facts. The facts are indeed essential. Apart from them there would be no such thing as the Christian religion. And yet, unless we place the same interpretation on them that the writers of the New Testament placed, they will not yield us

Christianity. Reject the facts that lie at the basis of Christianity and at once it dissolves into myths and legends. Accept these facts but give them an interpretation other than that which the New Testament gives them and that which they yield us will be something other than Christianity. We cannot overemphasize the importance of the facts that lie at the basis of the Christian religion, but let us not forget that these facts will yield us Christianity only as we place that same interpretation on them that the New Testament places.

I am especially concerned, at this time, to point out that this holds good of the fact of Christ's death. This fact can as little be disconnected from its meaning as others. Did not Paul write, "The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died" (II Cor. v:14), *i. e.*, the death of Christ had significance for him and his fellow-Christians only because they could and did place a certain intellectual construction upon it. That the meaning we attach to Christ's death is no less important than the fact that He died is never more evident than when we consider Paul's own religious experience. It was not the mere fact that Christ suffered and died that made Paul a Christian. He was aware of

this fact in his pre-Christian days; but in those days he placed an interpretation on this fact that did not yield him Christianity—an interpretation rather that made him a persecutor of Christianity. Moreover, it was not until he had been led to put another interpretation on this fact—or perhaps we should say that it was by virtue of the fact that he was led to put another interpretation on this fact—that he became a Christian. Paul, therefore, was writing out of his own experience when he declared that it was not the mere fact that Christ died but the intellectual construction that he placed on that fact that gave it that significance for him that it possessed.

If I have succeeded in making clear that this all too familiar distinction between “fact” and “theory” is not only untenable in itself but that it finds no support in the New Testament; and if I have made clear at the same time that is not the mere fact that Christ died but the meaning that we attach to that event that gives it that significance that it possesses, we are now in a position to appreciate the importance of the question—How has the Church of all ages, and more especially how did the Church of New Testament times, so construe the death of Christ that it was led to suppose that this event con-



tributed so much to that significance that the living Christ possesses?

In the first place they relate Christ's death to His love. They see in this event the all-sufficient evidence of the fact that the living Christ, He to whom all power had been committed in heaven and on earth, loved them and cared for them. Now what was there about the death of Christ that led them to see in it the supreme proof of His love for them? Unquestionably they saw in that death the final proof of His love for them because they saw that it stood in vital relation to their needs and necessities, because they perceived that it averted from them evils that could not otherwise be averted and secured for them blessings that could not otherwise be secured. This much springs from the nature of the case, since there could be no intelligible connection between Christ's death and His love for men if that death did not stand in vital relation to their needs and necessities. For instance, suppose that while sitting on your porch a runaway horse drawing an empty carriage comes dashing by. Suppose now that a man at the risk of his life should succeed in stopping this horse; and that he should then turn to you and say, "I did that to manifest my love for you." Would



you not be more impressed by his folly than his love? In fact would you not be inclined to think that there was need of a committee to inquire into his sanity? But suppose that you yourself or your loved ones were in that carriage and that he had succeeded in stopping the horse at the risk of his life just as it was about to dash over a dangerous precipice. Would you not be constrained to see in his act an all-sufficient proof of his interest in you? And so it is as regards the death of Christ. If that death had not stood in vital relation to our needs we would be at a loss to know why it took place. In that case it would seem to us a foolish and uncalled-for sacrifice on the part of Christ. But when we perceive that it stood in vital relation to our needs, that apart from it we could not have been saved, we are constrained to cry out—"greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

We obtain a more precise understanding of why they saw in Christ's death the crowning proof of His love for them when we note that they everywhere relate His death to sin and its forgiveness. They were conscious of themselves as sinners. Moreover they realized that just as when a man breaks the law of the land he is guilty and by the law of the land con-

demned, so when a man breaks the law of God he is guilty and by the law of God condemned. And yet they were conscious of themselves as forgiven, as those who could say, "there is now no condemnation for us" (Romans viii:1). This finds its explanation in the fact that they believed that Jesus had secured this forgiveness for them at the cost of His death. Nothing is more certain than that they believed that Christ, the sinless One, had received unmerited punishment in order that they might receive unmerited forgiveness.

This thought is involved in Christ's own words, "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi:28), and is witnessed to by all the disciples. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i:29), says John the Baptist. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (I Peter iii:18), and "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (I Peter ii:24), writes Peter. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. iii:13), and "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. v:21), writes Paul.

“Now once in the end of the world hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews ix:26), writes the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John i:7), and “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world” (I John ii:2), writes John. “He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah liii:5), writes Isaiah in words that are so frequently applied to Jesus in the New Testament that they may be fairly cited as reflecting the views of the early Christians.

In view of such passages—and their number might be greatly increased—it cannot be successfully denied that the early disciples saw in the death of Jesus Christ an expiatory sacrifice for sin; that they believed that He had received unmerited punishment in order that they might receive unmerited forgiveness; and that this conviction lay at the basis of that grateful love to Jesus Christ that was so characteristic of them. They loved Him because He had first loved them, and His love for them had been shown most of all by the fact that

He had borne their sins in His own body on the tree. No doubt the significance that the risen Christ had for the early Christians is not fully expressed when we say that they saw in Him One who, by virtue of His atoning death, was qualified to bestow upon them the forgiveness of their sins; and yet nothing is more certain than that any and all attempts to explain His significance for them without taking this into consideration is like attempting to explain "Hamlet" while making no mention of the Prince of Denmark, or like attempting to explain the place that Abraham Lincoln occupies in the thoughts and affections of the American people without taking into consideration the services he rendered while President of these United States.

The death of Christ is, at the same time, to be related to the love of God, the Father. The early Christians saw in that death not only the supreme proof of the Son's love but also the supreme proof of the Father's love. It is often said that while to speak of that death as an expiatory sacrifice for sin, as a satisfaction to divine justice, is to emphasize the greatness of that love wherewith Christ loved us; yet that it detracts from our conception of God, the Father, as a God of love and mercy, since it

implies that He was indisposed to forgive until an atonement had been made. No representation could be more foreign to the truth as it was conceived by the writers of the New Testament. So far were they from seeing in the sacrificial death of Christ that which detracted from their conception of God, the Father, as a God of love that we find them pointing to that death as the culminating proof of the Father's love. They never reason, God is love and therefore there is no need of an atonement: they ever reason, God is love and therefore He provided an atonement. As John says in words that might have been used by any of the Apostles, "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (I John iv:9, 10.)

No doubt if they had occupied the Unitarian point of view, according to which Jesus Christ is but a creature, they would have been as little able to see in His sacrificial death a proof of the Father's love as are our modern Unitarians. In that case it would be difficult to understand why they attached such a significance to His death, but at any rate it would

have spoken to them only of the love of Jesus and not at the same time of the love of the Father. Nothing is more certain, however, than that they occupied the Trinitarian point of view, according to which Jesus Christ himself is a member of the Godhead. According to the Trinitarian point of view God the Father and Jesus Christ are not two beings as different from each other as Paul Jones and John Smith; they are rather two persons of one substance, so that the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ involved a no less real sacrifice on the part of God, the Father. As Trinitarians, we do not suppose that some outside influence was brought to bear upon God to lead Him to love men notwithstanding their sin. Rather we believe that it was God himself in the person of His only-begotten Son who became incarnate for us men and our salvation. Hence we see in the sacrifice of the Son not only a manifestation of His own love but also a manifestation of the love of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. And in full harmony with this we read, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans v:8), "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth

on Him might not perish but have everlasting life." (John iii:16.)

Moreover while occupying the Trinitarian point of view we should not permit ourselves to be misled by the idea—so constantly reiterated in present-day literature—that those who deny that there was any need of an atonement to remove obstacles in the way of the exercise of divine mercy have a higher conception of God as a God of love than those who hold that Jesus by the sacrifice of himself removed such obstacles. No doubt if love in God is divorced from justice there is no need of an atonement. But if God is a God of holiness and righteousness as well as a God of love, we will be unable to perceive how He can be just and yet justify the ungodly unless we perceive with Paul that "He justifies them freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to show His righteousness \* \* \* that He might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." (Romans iii: 24-26.) Further, it ought to be evident to all that just in proportion as we emphasize God's hatred of and detestation of sin, and yet maintain that He himself provided a propitiation for sin, do we give content to our conception of



His love. In other words, the more clearly sin appears as an offense to God, the more is His love and mercy exalted, if none the less, at unspeakable cost to himself, He devises a way by which in consistency with His holiness and righteousness He may still forgive sin. We oppose this idea, therefore, not because it embodies too lofty a conception of God as a God of love, but because it embodies too low a conception of that love where-with God has loved us. As Prof. B. B. Warfield has said: "Assuredly it is impossible to put anything like their real content into these great words, 'God is love,' save as they are thrown out against the background of those other conceptions of equal loftiness, 'God is Light,' 'God is Righteousness,' 'God is Holiness,' 'God is a consuming fire.' The love of God cannot be apprehended in its length and breadth and height and depth—all of which pass knowledge—save as it is apprehended as the love of a God who turns from the sight of sin with inexpressible abhorrence, and burns against it with inexpressible indignation. The infinitude of His love is illustrated not by His lavishing His favors on sinners without requiring an expiation of sin, but by His—through such holiness and through such righteousness as



cannot but cry out with infinite abhorrence and indignation—still loving sinners so greatly that He himself provides a satisfaction for their sin adequate to meet these tremendous demands.” (*The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, by J. B. Remensnyder, Introduction, p. xxviii.)

I have endeavored to make clear why the living Christ would have little or no significance for us, if the virtue of His death was not perpetuated in His life. Apart from that death He would not be qualified to be our Saviour and Redeemer. We are told that while one of the saints of the middle ages was praying in his cell there appeared to him a figure of wondrous strength and beauty, who said unto him, “I am thy Lord, fall down and worship me.” The saint was so filled with admiration that he was about to accede to the request but ere he did so he asked the question, “Where are the print of the nails?” At once we are told the figure disappeared, for it was an angel of darkness clothed as an angel of light. There is a profound truth embodied in this legend; and that truth is this—the Christ of reality is One who has in His hands and His feet the print of the nails. All other Christs are Christs of the imagination. To them no reality corresponds. The object of our faith as Christians is not sim-

ply Jesus: it is Jesus as crucified. It is only because He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification that He is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God through Him.

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

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## CHAPTER TEN: JESUS AS THE RE- GENERATOR OF CHARACTER

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For to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practice. But if what I would not that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. I find then the law, that to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

—*Romans vii: 18-25.*

## X

### JESUS AS THE REGENERATOR OF CHARACTER

**I**N the third chapter of this book I pointed out that Christ's primary purpose in coming into this world was to save sinners. This does not simply mean that He came to save us from the consequences of our sins, true as that is; it means more especially that He came to save us from the power and dominion of sin and to restore us to the kingdom of righteousness. His purpose, therefore, will not have been realized until out of the members of our sinful race there has been produced a type of manhood and womanhood that finds its archetype in Jesus himself. While then He comes before us not only as a teacher but as an example of that which we should be, yet He comes, first of all, as a Saviour both from the guilt and power of sin.

Only as we grasp this fact can we perceive the fundamental difference between Christianity and all other religions. There are, indeed, many varieties of religion in this world,

and yet there are but two kinds. The one, whatever the historic form it may have taken, assumes that man is to save himself, that literally he is the architect of his own fortune, the carver of his own destiny; the other, whatever the historic form it may have taken, assumes that man, if he is to be saved at all, must be saved by a power outside of himself, that in the strict sense of the word there is no such thing as a self-made man, that the highest type of man ever says with Paul, "I am what I am by the grace of God." The contrast between these two types of religion is clear and unmistakable. The one calls upon man to save himself; the other brings him into contact with a power that saves him. The one is a religion, replete it may be with moral and spiritual lessons, unsurpassed it may be in wise counsel and good advice, and yet with no dynamic, no source of energy, save that which inheres in man as man; the other, while it may be equally rich in spiritual insight and practical wisdom, yet finds its distinctive quality in the fact that it proclaims a completed redemption, in the fact that it brings man into contact with a living Redeemer and so with a dynamical power, an energizing force other than that which inheres in man as man.

There is no need of pointing out to which of these kinds of religions Christianity belongs. There may be need, however, of emphasizing the fact that Christianity stands in a class by itself among the religions of the world. That such is the case appears when we consider that it is the only religion that even professes to offer the world a divine redemption in and by the work of another, and so to do more than first instruct and then arouse into activity those powers of conscience and sensibility and will that inhere in man as man.

No doubt there have been interpretations of Christianity presented to the world—notably in the case of Unitarianism—that seek to eliminate this fundamental difference between the religion that Jesus founded and the other religions of the earth, and so to reduce Jesus himself to the dimensions of a great religious leader; and yet nothing is more certain than that Unitarianism is something other than Christianity as Christianity was understood by the early Christians and as it has been understood by all the great branches of the Christian Church, so that it is only by a misuse of words that Unitarians, and all such as deny that Jesus is the author of their salvation, call themselves Christians at all. The existence of such

interpretations of Christianity, therefore, do not contradict the statement that Christianity is the one religion that offers salvation in and by the work of another.

Those who would fain see in Christianity a religion that simply calls upon men to save themselves may see in Jesus our greatest teacher in the things of the spirit. They may believe that He inculcated the purest of morals and proclaimed the loftiest of ideals. They may believe, moreover, that He so embodied these teachings in His own life that in Him we have a perfect example of that which we ourselves should be. They may even believe that He was a prophet sent from God, that He performed miracles, and that after His death He rose from the dead. All this and more they may believe concerning Him. The one thing, however, that they may not believe concerning Him is that an expiatory significance attached to His death or that He energizes in our lives in a way that finds no analogy in the influence that one man exerts over another. And yet unless we can believe these things concerning Jesus, Christianity brings to the world nothing more than GOOD ADVICE, of which there was already a surfeit, and ceases to be that GOOD NEWS that throughout all the changing cen-



turies has gladdened and heartened the souls of the children of men.

If, however, we see in Christianity a religion of a different sort, if in fact we see in it the one religion that offers salvation from the guilt and power of sin in and through the work of another, it is evident that we must see in Jesus One who does more than give us good advice, more than set before us a perfect ideal of life. We must see in Him One who made expiation for our sins as well as One who because He liveth forever is able to break that dominion that sin has over us and to enable us to translate into life the truths that He taught, and thus to realize within ourselves that ideal of character and conduct that is embodied in the life He lived—imperfectly, to be true, in this life, yet ever more perfectly knowing that “now are we the children of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Now it is only as we think of Jesus in this latter sense that we are warranted in speaking of Him as the regenerator of character. We cannot speak of Jesus as the regenerator of character unless He be more than a teacher and example, unless He do more than incite and en-

courage us to be and to do that which we ought to be and do. If we are to see in Him the re-generator of character, we must see in Him one who effects a radical change in our very natures; one who retunes the harp of life and so enables the harps that were capable only of discords to send forth melodious notes; one who so ingrafts the tree of life that the trees that were capable only of bearing evil fruit are now capable of bearing good fruit; and so one who enables us to be and do that which apart from Him we would not be able to do, no matter what moral and spiritual influences might be brought to bear upon us.

That Jesus is rightly spoken of as the re-generator of character lies at the very basis of the Christian's hope and calls for no proof at this time, unless it be to remind you that every shred of evidence that goes to prove the trustworthiness of the New Testament as well as the tenableness of Christianity goes to prove at the same time that Jesus was and is such an One; for unless Jesus be such an One there ought not to be such a thing as Christianity, as Christianity has been understood in the past and as it is understood to-day by all the great branches of the Christian Church.

Moreover, this is the only sort of a religious

leader that can meet the needs of men. Ethical teachers of all ages have bewailed the fact that "men know the good without the power to do it and that they know the evil without the power to avoid it." We need only make a serious attempt to be and do what we ought to be and do to realize how true this is. In proportion as we seriously endeavor to be and do what we ought to be and do, will we make our own that despairing cry to which Paul gave such striking expression, "to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do. I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" Who of us does not know as a matter of experience that it is not enough that we know what we ought to be and do? It is even probable that the worst man in the world knows his duty better than the best man performs it. It is certain that in the best of men practice lags far behind knowledge, and that struggle as we may we cannot of ourselves

bring these two within hailing distance of each other.

It would, therefore, have profited us little or nothing if Jesus had been content to be a moral teacher who exemplified in His own life that which He taught. What we need more than instruction and more than example is power, an energy that will enable us to translate into terms of life and character that which Jesus taught and exemplified. Now it is one of the peculiar glories of Christianity that it provides us with such a dynamic. In Jesus Christ we have One who not only tells us what to do but who enables us to do it; One who not only gives us a vision of the good but who makes it possible for us to realize that good in our own lives. Have you never noticed with what frequency this word "power" is used in the New Testament in connection with Jesus and His Gospel? "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power," and "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because it is the power of God unto salvation," says Paul. "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh," says John. "The multitude glorified God who had given such power unto men," says Matthew. "His word was with power," says Luke. "The kingdom of God comes with power," says Mark.

“We made known unto you the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,” says Peter. “He upholds all things by the word of His power,” says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. “All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me,” said Jesus himself just before He parted from His disciples on Olivet.

It is this element of power in Jesus Christ that constitutes one of the chief elements in that good news that Christianity brings to a sinful world. Apart from this element Jesus would no doubt still possess significance as a moral and spiritual teacher; and yet He would simply differ in degree and not in kind from men like Socrates and Plato and Aristotle and Confucius and others. Because of this element of power, however, He occupies a unique place among the moral and spiritual leaders of mankind. Others may hold before us visions of truth and duty. In Jesus alone is to be found a dynamic that enables us to realize those visions in our own lives. Eliminate this element from the Christian proclamation and at once it becomes a proclamation of despair rather than one of hope. For in that case the Christian proclamation would differ from others only by reason of the greater purity and loftiness of the ideal it sets before us, and so

of the greater stringency of the demand it makes upon us. Then as we listened and saw ourselves in the light of that proclamation we could not but cry out that such teaching is too high for us, that we cannot attain unto it. Give this element of power its rightful place in the Christian proclamation, however, and it retains its character as a message of hope. For in that case the purity and loftiness of its ideal and so the stringency of its demands becomes a prophecy of that which we, by the help of Jesus Christ, shall one day become. Still further, when we give this element of power its rightful place in the Christian proclamation we are enabled to proclaim it confidently and joyfully even to the worst of sinners, because we see in Jesus Christ one who is able to break that dominion that sin has over them and to lead them on from victory unto victory until that ideal that was actualized in His own person shall have been actualized in them.

It is evident, in view of what has been said, that Christianity in its efforts to regenerate mankind does not put its confidence in education and culture and such like. It places its confidence in Jesus Christ. It does not indeed underestimate the significance of such things; but it does realize that these things of themselves

are insufficient, incapable of bringing about the desired results. So far is it from being true that Christianity underestimates culture that it is rather true that it is the chief and highest power making for culture. If by culture we mean the harmonious development of ALL our faculties, then I am prepared to say that apart from Jesus Christ true culture is unattainable. None the less Christianity realizes that education and culture, that leaves Jesus Christ out of consideration, while they may make men clever, polished, brilliant, have no power to change their characters. At the most these things of themselves only cleanse the outside of the cup; they do not affect the nature of its contents. Those who place their confidence in education, culture and such like assume that all that is needed to change the wild olive tree into a good olive tree is pruning, spraying, cultivation and such like, whereas what the tree needs first of all is that it be grafted with a scion from a good olive tree. And until this is done all labor that is spent on the tree is for the most part wasted. We do not underestimate the value of education and culture, and yet one might as well suppose that he could purify the waters of a river by improving the scenery along its banks as suppose that these



things of themselves are capable of transforming the hearts of the children of men. There is more hope, therefore, we believe for the most illiterate, the most uncultured of men in whose hearts Jesus Christ dwells than for the most learned, the most cultured of men whose hearts are strangers to His presence. Because in and through Him, and in and through Him alone, is a true culture, *i. e.*, a harmonious development of the whole man, body, soul and spirit, attainable; and hence those who are united to Him by a living faith, no matter how uncultured they may be now, are certain in God's good time to attain to that goal.

O Thou Christ of God! We praise Thee as that teacher who speaks with authority concerning the realities of life, as that prophet who inculcated the purest of morals and proclaimed the loftiest of ideals, as that man whose life was pure and stainless, in whom we can find nothing to forgive: but above all we praise Thee as the Saviour of the world, as the Lord and Life of humanity. And though there be those who see in Thee One without form or comeliness, so that they perceive in Thee no beauty that they should desire Thee, yet to those conscious of their guilt how priceless is Thy blood, how precious the thought of Thy



atoning sacrifice! To them Thou art indeed the chief among ten thousand and the One altogether lovely. And though there be those who in their pride and self-sufficiency proclaim that they have no need of Thee, that they will be the architects of their own fortunes, the carvers of their own destinies, yet to those conscious of the chasm that yawns between what they are and what they ought to be, between what they ought to be and what they of themselves are capable of becoming, how priceless the thought that Thou art the Lord and life of humanity! How welcome the thought that Thou art able to break that dominion that sin exercises over them and to lead them onward and upward until Thou dost bring them unto moral perfection!



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## CHAPTER ELEVEN: JESUS AS THE REGENERATOR OF SOCIETY

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After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

—*Matthew vi: 9, 10.*

## XI

### JESUS AS THE REGENERATOR OF SOCIETY

**I** HAVE spoken concerning Jesus as the regenerator of the individual. To-day I want to speak concerning Jesus as the regenerator of society.

It is unquestionably true that Jesus throws the emphasis upon the regeneration of the individual; and yet nothing is more certain than that Jesus aims at more than the regeneration of the individual—that He aims at the regeneration of society itself, and hence that Christ's purpose will not have been realized until out of the members of our sinful race there has been produced not only Christlike men and women but a society in which justice shall prevail, in which love shall be the law and happiness the universal condition. We are not to suppose, therefore, that the fact that Jesus emphasizes the regeneration of the individual involves any indifference on His part to social conditions. No inference could be less warranted. Rather

we should see in this emphasis on the individual an indication of the fact that He is wisely concerned about such matters, inasmuch as the regeneration of the individual is the condition of the regeneration of society.

It is just here that we perceive most clearly the superiority of Jesus to the ordinary social reformer. There are plenty of others who have an eye for the frightful inequalities and injustices of existing social conditions, and who earnestly long and labor for a better order of things: but because they are ignorant of, or indifferent to, Christ's ability to save men both from the guilt and the power of sin, they have been led to approach the social problem from without and to imagine that the improvement of man's environment—the securing for him of better houses and better clothes and better food as well as more leisure—will of itself usher in this new order of things. If all, or even most, of the people who live in good houses and wear good clothes and eat good food and enjoy ample leisure were themselves good from the point of view of an ideal social order, we might be justified in putting our confidence in these things. In view of the fact, however, that many who possess these things in abundant measure live selfishly, utterly regardless of the happiness

and welfare of others, it is evident that these have misplaced their confidence and that it is utterly vain to suppose that the end desired can be secured by such means. We ought not indeed to be indifferent to these things, because the conditions in the midst of which many of our fellows live are nothing short of frightful. Moreover, it is unquestionably true that our environment powerfully influences our characters. All efforts to obtain better social conditions, whether by means of wise legislation or otherwise, ought, therefore, to receive our sympathetic support. And yet we should never suppose that a mere change of environment will produce changed lives. As an old Jewish proverb has it: "Take the bitter tree and plant it in the garden of Eden and water it with the rivers there; and let the angel Gabriel be the gardener and the tree will still bear bitter fruit." Those who imagine that a better order of things can be ushered in simply by improving external conditions are going on the assumption that if we cleanse the outside of the cup the inside will become fresh and clean of itself. It is vain, however, to look for a better order of things, no matter how much the present order of things may be changed, unless the general level of manhood and womanhood be raised. Now

the unique significance of Jesus Christ as a social reformer lies just at this point, *viz.*: in His ability to effect a radical change in men's hearts, and thus to create a new and higher type of manhood and womanhood, and only as this is done, and in proportion as it is done, can we hope for a society in which justice shall prevail, in which love shall be the law and happiness the universal condition.

Moreover, the facts of history prove that up to date at least Jesus has been the most effective of social reformers. That which others have accomplished along these lines is as nothing as compared with that which Jesus has accomplished. No doubt much remains to be done, and yet unquestionably we are indebted to Jesus for most of what has been done. A comparison between the social conditions that prevailed before the coming of Jesus and those that prevail to-day throughout Christendom, together with a comparison between the social conditions prevailing throughout Christendom with those that prevail in non-Christian lands, affords convincing proof of this. The thought I have in mind here has been eloquently expressed by James Russell Lowell—"When the microscopic search of scepticism which has hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to dis-



prove the existence of a Creator has turned its attention to human society, and found a place on this planet, ten miles square, where a decent man can live in decency, comfort and security, supporting and educating his children, unspoiled and unpolluted; a place where age is revered, infancy protected, manhood respected, womanhood honored, and human life held in due regard—when sceptics can find such a place, ten miles square on this globe, where the gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way, and laid the foundations, and made decency and security possible, it will be in order for the sceptical *literati* to move thither and ventilate their views. But as long as these very men are dependent upon the very religion which they discard for every privilege which they enjoy, they may well hesitate a little before they seek to rob the Christian of his hope, and humanity of its faith in that Saviour who alone has given to man that hope of life eternal which makes life tolerable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its gloom." Let us not forget that bad as are existing social conditions throughout Christendom, they would be infinitely worse were it not for that leaven that Jesus cast into the meal of humanity. If Jesus should cease His activi-

ties, it is certain not only that we would fail to make further progress along these lines but that we would lose what we have already gained.

It is involved in what has been said, and yet it may be well to emphasize the fact, that Jesus' effectiveness as a social reformer lies in His ability to deal with sin. Other reformers have much to say about imperfect legislation, unfavorable environment and such like, but they have little to say about sin. And this, notwithstanding the fact that sin on the part of somebody is the great root-cause of social misery. The late Prof. James Orr was well within the facts when he said, "Take away from the history of humanity all the evils which have come on man through his own folly, sin, and vice; through the follies and vices of society; through tyranny, misgovernment and oppression; through the cruelty and inhumanity of man to man; and how vast a portion of the problem of evil would already be solved! What myriads of lives have been sacrificed on the shrines of Bacchus and Lust; what untold misery has been inflicted on the race to gratify the unscrupulous ambitions of ruthless conquerors; what tears and groans have sprung from the institution of slavery; what wretchedness is

hourly inflicted on human hearts by domestic tyranny, private selfishness, the preying of the strong on the weak, the dishonesty and chicanery of society! \* \* \* If all the suffering and sorrow which follows directly or indirectly from human sin could be abstracted, what a happy world after all this would be!" (*The Christian View of God and the World*, p. 186.) We may be sure, therefore, that if Jesus had had as little to say about sin as many of our modern reformers, His efforts along the lines of social betterment would have proven as ineffective as theirs. More especially, we may be sure, that if He was no more capable of dealing with sin in the way of exterminating it than are others, His efforts would have produced no lasting results. His work has proven effective while that of others has proven ineffective because He alone is able to deal with sin, the great root-cause of social misery. It is this ability that puts Him in a class by himself among social reformers; and moreover it is because He possesses this ability that He affords the one ground for believing that a kingdom of love and righteousness shall yet be realized on earth.

But while Christianity, because of its faith in Jesus Christ, confidently looks forward to a renewed earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, we

are not to suppose that it is committed to any specific social scheme. Christianity as such does not take sides between the advocates of the present social order and that proposed, for instance, by socialists. No doubt there is much in the present social order, such as child labor, sweat shops, white slavery, alcoholism, unfair distribution of wealth, militarism, that must be eliminated before Christianity's hope for this world is realized: and no doubt there is much about Socialism as it has been commonly advocated, such as its irreligion, its materialism, its class hatred, that must be eliminated before it can even pretend to be in harmony with Christianity's hope for this world. And yet Christianity of itself does not enable us to determine whether this better order of things is to come about through the elimination of the bad features and the strengthening of the good features of the present social order, or whether with the retention of what is good in the present social order there is to be a reorganization of society along the economic lines proposed by Socialism.

If most Christians oppose Socialism it is not because they are committed to the present social order by virtue of the fact that they are Christians; but rather because they believe that

Socialism as an economic arrangement would not bring about the good results claimed for it. Because, in fact, they believe that it would be the occasion of more evil than it would cure; and hence the putting of it into practice would retard rather than promote the realization of an ideal social order. Prove that the reorganization of society along the lines proposed by Socialism would produce not merely a social order that is more just and equitable and thus better fitted to develop a high type of manhood and womanhood than the present social order; but one that is more just and equitable and thus better fitted to develop a high type of manhood and womanhood than the present social order, provided the present social order be freed from its bad and strengthened in its good features; and as Christian citizens it would be our duty to do all in our power to further the progress of Socialism. As long, however, as it appears to us that Socialism as an economic arrangement would be decidedly inferior to the present order as it is, and more especially to the present order as it may become, it is our duty as Christian citizens to do all in our power to hinder its progress.

But while Christianity is not committed to any specific social scheme and hence cannot

justly be spoken of as committed to the advocacy of the present social order; and while Christianity does not make its appeal to any one class within the social order, yet unquestionably its social affinities are and ever have been with the poor and oppressed rather than with the rich and powerful. From this point of view the fundamental note of Christianity was struck in those words from the prophecy of Isaiah that Jesus chose as the text of His first recorded sermon, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has annointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." If it be true, then, that there are laboring men who suppose that Christianity is out of sympathy with them in their efforts to secure better conditions for themselves and their children, this is only because they have got their conception of Christianity from those professing Christians who, by their unsocial conduct, have misrepresented Christianity before the world, and not because the facts warrant such a notion. Nothing is more to be regretted than the fact that so many workingmen have apparently got the notion

that the sympathies of Christianity are with the so-called capitalist class. As a matter of fact, as Shailer Mathews has pointed out, the best elements in that social ideal that is preached by Socialism are themselves children of the Christian Church—prodigals, perhaps, strayed far from home and into strange companionships, but none the less children.

Now, in view of what has been said, it would appear that the method by which we can best further the social ideal is the method of evangelization. This method has proven the most effective in the past, and moreover it promises most for the future. No doubt other factors such as education and legislation have their part to play and yet these things of themselves must ever prove ineffective because they have no power to change men's natures. Jesus alone has the power to do that, and hence it is only as men are brought into living relations with Him that we can hope to see wrong and injustice cast out and love and righteousness triumphant. As Dr. James Stalker has said in his recent book *The Ethics of Jesus*: "Even from the point of view of benevolence, evangelization is the deepest service that one man can render another. For while ordinary benevolence may feed the hungry and clothe the



naked, evangelization enables the poor to feed and clothe themselves; because it touches the springs of manhood and self-respect and transforms the whole condition from within; and while it does so on a small scale in the individual and family, it does so no less on the great scale in the nation or race; for the whole course of history ever since the Advent goes to prove that, wherever the light of the Gospel shines, the blessings of civilization abound also." Those, therefore, who are doing most toward carrying out the last great command, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations \* \* \* teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you," are those also who are doing most toward bringing in the better order of things. The need of this age, therefore, as of all ages, is an evangelization that teaches men *to do all the things* that Jesus commanded. In the very nature of the case men cannot take Jesus as their Saviour both from the guilt and power of sin and at the same time strive to do *all the things* He commanded without becoming centers of influence that make for social well-being.

No doubt there have been, and are, Christians who have gone on the assumption that Jesus simply aims to save them out of the



world and who as a result have lived out their lives more or less regardless of social conditions; but that is only because they have accepted and endeavored to live a part rather than the whole of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is inconceivable that those who accept the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ should be indifferent to social conditions.

And no doubt there have been, and are, those who, though identified with the Church, have made their way to wealth and power by exploiting their fellows and who surrounded with every comfort are wholly indifferent to the welfare and happiness of others; but that only proves that such are merely Christian in name and not in fact; it does not at all militate against the conviction that only as the Gospel of Jesus Christ is accepted and lived in its entirety can we hope for the full coming of that Kingdom in which there shall be no wrong or injustice or oppression but only that which is right and just and according to the law of love.

“Poor world! if thou cravest a better day,  
Remember that Christ must have His own way;  
I mourn thou art not as thou mightest be,  
But the love of God would do all for thee.”



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## CHAPTER TWELVE: JESUS AS A MAN AND AS A FRIEND

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The man Christ Jesus.

—*I Timothy ii: 5.*

Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you.

—*John xv: 14, 15.*

## XII

### JESUS AS A MAN AND AS A FRIEND

**W**HEN we think of Jesus as one who possessed miraculous power, as one who was wholly free from sin and error, as one who regenerates not only the individual but society itself, as one whose right it is to rule over nations as well as individuals, we are apt to be so greatly impressed by that which separates between Him and us as to forget that which we have in common. In other words the divine in Him is apt to loom so large in our minds as to lead us to forget His humanity, the fact that He was and is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

It is this, for instance, that accounts in large degree for the position accorded the Virgin Mary in the worship of Rome. The majesty and divinity of Jesus seemed to remove Him so far from men that they felt the need of His mother as one who would mediate between Him and them. As an illustration of this Bernard of Clairvaux is quoted as asking in one of his sermons: "Dost thou fear the divine majesty

in the Son? Wilt thou find an advocate before Him? Flee to Mary; in her humanity is pure. The Son will listen to the mother and the Father to the Son." No doubt other factors worked toward bringing about that worship and intercession of Mary that prevails in the Roman Catholic Church, despite the fact that it is without scriptural warrant. Yet unquestionably the prominence of the Virgin Mary in the worship of Rome finds its explanation in large part in the fact that men think of the Father and the Son as so far removed from them that they feel the need of a purely human being to intercede in their behalf. In harmony with this judgment we find Cardinal Gibbons in his book, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, quoting with approval the words of Longfellow, taken from his *Golden Legend*,

"And even as children who have much offended  
A too indulgent father, in great shame,  
Penitent, and yet not daring unattended  
To go into his presence, at the gate  
Speak to their sister and confiding wait  
Till she goes in before and intercedes;  
So men, repenting of their evil deeds,  
And yet not venturing rashly to draw near  
With their requests, an angry Father's ear  
Offer to her their prayers and their confession,  
And she in heaven for them makes intercession."

I am, of course, speaking to those who, while they may honor Mary as the most blessed of women, do not suppose that she occupies the position of an intercessor between them and God. And yet I am speaking to those who need to be on their guard lest they so emphasize that which is divine in Jesus as to lead them to underemphasize that which He has in common with themselves.

It is indeed true that Jesus is pictured in the Scriptures as a divine, as a supernatural being, as one whose rank in the scale of being places Him alongside of God; and yet, while He is pictured as more than a man, nothing is more certain than that He is pictured as a man. Hence the difference of opinion that exists at this point is not that some see in Jesus simply a man while others see in Him simply a God. The difference lies in the fact that some see in Him simply a man while others, though falling behind them in no respect in their confession of His humanity, believe at the same time that He is more than a man. Those of us, therefore, who see in Jesus one who is to be honored as God yield in no respect to others in our confession of His humanity, so that there is no hesitation whatever on our part when we say that in all that goes to make a man, whether

as regards his body or his soul, Jesus was and is a man. We may be more or less at a loss to explain just how one person can unite the qualities of divinity with those of humanity, but we are in no doubt as to the fact itself.

Moreover, those who derive their conception of Jesus from the New Testament rather than from their imaginations will see in Jesus not only a man but the most accessible, the most easily approachable of men. We need only think of the mothers bringing their children to Jesus, of the woman of Samaria entering into conversation with Him at the well of Jacob, of the woman who was a sinner who entered into the Pharisees' house and wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, as well as other events of a similar nature in His life, to perceive how true this is.

There is nothing more wonderful about Jesus than this, in view on the one hand of His sinless character and on the other hand of the supernatural power He wielded. We would naturally have expected that sinful men would have felt uncomfortable in the presence of a sinless being somewhat as we, in lesser degree, are apt to feel uncomfortable, "sort of out of place," in the presence of one whose life is singularly pure; and yet this did not prove



true in the case of Jesus. Though He was one who loved righteousness and hated iniquity, yet sinners of their own accord went to Him and made Him their confidant. Evidently they saw in Him one whose sympathy for the sinner was no less lively than His hatred of sin. Again we would naturally have expected that men would have feared in the presence of one who wielded supernatural power. It is not a great while since men believed in witches, in human beings who wielded a supernatural power by means of which they could bless or curse their fellows; and we all know how fearful men were of them and the extremes to which they went to get rid of them. And yet though in the days of His flesh He was universally believed to exercise divine power—even His enemies did not question it—we do not find that men were fearful of Him, that they were in dread lest He should turn this power against them. Evidently this finds its explanation in the fact that they saw in Him one who was absolutely good and therefore one of whom it was utterly certain that He would use His power beneficently.

Now in view of the fact that Jesus is a man—and the most accessible, the most approachable of men—there is nothing surprising in the fact that in the Scriptures He is spoken of as

sustaining to men the relation of a friend. This is only what was to be expected on the one hand in view of what we know of His earthly life as a whole, and on the other hand in view of the fact that He is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever." There is no reason, then, why we should not take His words at their face value when He says to His disciples and through them to us: "Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what His Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

It is wonderful that Jesus should have called those poor, rough, uncultured, half-educated fishermen of Galilee His friends; and yet, as I have intimated, the full significance of these words has not dawned upon us unless we realize that they concern not simply a fact in ancient history but a fact that has been repeated throughout all the changing centuries, and that is being repeated to-day wherever the name of Jesus is known and loved. As the late Alexander Maclaren said: "The friendship of which we here read lasts to-day. A peculiarity of Christianity is the strong personal tie of real love and intimacy which will bind men, to the

end of time, to this Man that died nineteen hundred years ago. We look back into the wastes of antiquity: mighty names rise there that we reverence; there are great teachers from whom we have learned, and to whom, after a fashion, we are grateful. But what a gulf there is between us and the best and noblest of them! But here is a dead Man, who to-day is the Object of passionate attachment and a love deeper than life to millions of people, and will be till the end of time. There is nothing in the whole history of the world in the least like that strange bond which ties you and me to the Saviour, and the paradox of the Apostle remains a unique fact in the experience of humanity: 'Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, ye love.' We stretch out our hands across the waste, silent centuries, and there, amidst the mists of oblivion, thickening round all other figures in the past, we touch the warm, throbbing heart of our Friend, who lives forever, and forever is near us. We here, nearly two millenniums after the words fell in the nightly air on the road to Gethsemane, have them coming directly to our own hearts. A perpetual bond unites men with Christ to-day; and for us, as really as in that long-past Paschal night, is it true, 'Ye are My friends.' '' (*Expositions of Holy Scriptures.*)

Do we know Jesus as our friend? Do we make Him our daily confidant? Do we go to Him for sympathy and encouragement? If not, we are not living up to our full privileges as the children of God. It may be that we trust Jesus as our Saviour, that we bow before Him as our Lord; and yet that we do not enjoy the glad consciousness that He is our friend. Perhaps we even think that it is, in a measure, presumptuous for us to call Jesus our friend. Who or what are we that we should stand on such terms of intimacy with the Saviour of the world, with the Lord and Life of humanity? Yet incredible as it may seem, Jesus calls those who trust and obey Him His friends, and inasmuch as friendship is always mutual it is evident that He would have such call Him their friend. If we are among those who trust and obey Jesus it is not presumptuous for us to call Him our friend. In that case we are merely doing what He would have us to do and so what we are entitled to do. We no doubt feel how unworthy we are of this privilege, but none the less this privilege is ours; and we have not fully entered upon our inheritance in Christ Jesus unless we know Him not only as our Saviour and King but also as our Friend.

Surely it ought to mean much to us to have

such a friend as Jesus. There is nothing rarer, nothing to be prized more, even among men than a true friend. Well does the poet say, "Those friends thou hast and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel." And yet valuable as are these earthly friends, there is no merely earthly friend who for one moment can be compared with our divine friend—no one who understands us so well, who sympathizes with us so fully, whose interest in us is so unselfish, so disinterested. There are times when even our best earthly friends misunderstand us, when they misinterpret our actions: Jesus never does. And then we experience at times a bitterness of spirit, an anguish of soul, the burden of which no human being can adequately share; but there is no bitterness of spirit, no anguish of soul that Jesus is not fully able to share. Hence we cannot but realize, at times, the inadequacy of all purely human friends, that there is that for which we would go to them in vain for relief—what can they do to still the voice of conscience, to speak peace to sin-troubled souls? The sufficiency of Jesus, however, is never exhausted. From age to age He stands saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take

my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Moreover, we cannot but realize that all earthly friends are more or less fickle, that we can have no absolute assurance that they will always remain true. Their love for and interest in us may grow cold; they may leave us and forsake us when we need them most. We may be sure, however, that this will not prove true of Jesus. His love was put to the supreme test, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." Because His love stood that test we may be sure it will not yield to any lesser test.

And then our earthly friends cannot always be with us. Much of our lives must be lived apart from them. As far as they are concerned much of our lives must be lived in solitude. It is different, however, with Jesus. He is ever with us. With Jesus as our friend we need never live in solitude; we need never feel that we are alone in the world unloved, unthought of: and walking hand in hand with Him through this dark world we can possess tranquillity of spirit even in the midst of dangers because greater is He that is with us than they that be against us.

O Jesus! Thou art indeed the friend of friends, the One that sticketh closer than a brother! Thou hast done for us that which none other hath done, that which none other could have done. Thou art unto us that which none other is, that which none other could be. Of Thee did the prophet speak when he said: "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

And now, finally, I would ask you to note that because we are the friends of Jesus we are co-workers with Him here on earth. This is alluded to in the words, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Jesus does not mean to deny that we are His servants. We are such and like Paul we should glory in the fact. He does mean to say, however, that we are not mere servants, that we are also friends, and as such coworkers with Himself. The difference between a mere servant and a coworker is not that the one works harder, or is subjected to greater privations, than the other: the difference lies in the fact that the one works



in ignorance of the purposes of his master, and so is treated as a mere tool, while the other is permitted to share the thoughts of his master, to know the why and the wherefore of what he is doing, to have the glad consciousness that he is furthering an end with which he is in full sympathy. Let us rejoice that in carrying out His purposes Jesus does not treat us as mere servants, that He permits us to share His plans and purposes, and thus that our lives are dignified and our manhood honored by being treated as coworkers with Him. Let us see to it that we prove worthy of the confidence He has reposed in us and let us strive so to live that Jesus will have less and less reason to be ashamed of His friends.



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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: JESUS AS JUDGE

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For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son.

—*John v: 22.*

And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

—*Acts x: 42.*

For we must all be made manifest before the Judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

—*II Corinthians v: 10.*

### XIII

#### JESUS AS JUDGE

THERE are few subjects concerning which Jesus speaks more frequently or at greater length than the subject of judgment. At times this judgment is spoken of as subjective, as the judgment that men consciously or unconsciously pass upon themselves according as they choose the good or the bad. More frequently, however, it is spoken of as objective, as the judgment that the Judge of all passes upon men according as they choose the good or the bad. At times it is spoken of as taking place in the present, as a continuous process in the lives of individuals and of nations. These judgments that take place in the present, however, are recognized as partial and inadequate, so partial and inadequate that of themselves they do not make clear that God is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works. Hence we find that more frequently it is spoken of as a future judgment that will

take place at the end of the world. This coming judgment is spoken of as based on the deeds done in the body, as universal in its scope, as wholly in accord with the demands of justice, as the final and complete vindication of the righteousness of God.

No doubt this finds its explanation in the intensely ethical character of His teaching, in the fact that for Him the great issues of life are its moral issues. Life being what it is, a mixture of good and evil, in proportion as we emphasize the moral and ethical will we feel the need of emphasizing the thought of judgment, and especially the thought of a coming judgment in which the wrongs and injustices of this world will be righted. There is nothing surprising, therefore, in the fact that Jesus should have spoken so frequently and at such length on this subject. That is only what was to be expected in view of the predominantly ethical character of His views of God, of man, and of the world.

If Jesus had done no more than emphasize the thought of judgment, and particularly of a judgment to come, He would not have differed essentially in this respect from those who had preceded Him. For, of course, this thought of a judgment that culminates in a final judgment did not originate with Jesus. It was al-

ready the common possession of all religious systems. No doubt we are warranted in saying that there is less of the gross and fantastic and trivial in connection with His utterances on this subject than in connection with the utterances of those who preceded Him. We would scarcely be warranted in saying more, however, were it not for the fact that elements are to be found in His teaching on this subject that find no parallel in the teachings of others.

We find not only that Jesus emphasized the thought of judgment, we find that He taught that in himself was to be found the standard by which men were being judged and by which they would be judged at the last day. Others had spoken of judgment, but none before and none since, among the sane at least, have spoken of themselves as the standard of judgment. Unless Jesus was absolutely without sin, unless His life was wholly in harmony with the will of God, it is utterly incredible that He is the standard by which we are being and by which we will be judged. Either, therefore, this claim on Jesus' part bears witness to His consciousness of the fact that He was without sin or it bears witness to the fact that He was the victim of a disordered mind.

Still further we find not only that Jesus em-

phasized the thought of a coming judgment, we find that He emphasized the fact that in that coming judgment He himself will be the judge and that as such He will assign to men their eternal destinies according as they have done good or according as they have done evil. No more tremendous claim was put forth, or in the nature of the case could have been put forth, by Jesus than this claim to be the final arbiter of the destiny of each and every individual. And yet extraordinary as was this claim on the part of Jesus, it is scarcely more extraordinary than the fact that the early Christian community—many of whom knew Him in the days of His flesh—should have accepted Him as such. Nothing is more indicative of the profound impression He made upon them than this, that they believed Him even when He claimed to be the judge of the world. That they did this lies upon the surface of the New Testament; for, of course, the New Testament bears witness not only to the beliefs of those who wrote it but to the beliefs of the Christian community as a whole, so that Paul, for instance, speaks not only for himself but for the early Christian community when he writes, “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the

body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Extraordinary, however, as is this claim made by Jesus and admitted by the early Christian community, it is no more extraordinary than some of the other claims He put forth. Moreover, it is in full harmony with them. Have we not already seen that He centered attention upon himself as the object of religion, as one whom men should worship, trust and obey?—a thing that He would not have been warranted in doing, if His rank in the scale of being had been inferior to that of God himself.

If this claim to be the judge of the world stood by itself, *i. e.*, unsupported by His general career, it would unquestionably have been rejected by His contemporaries just as certainly as it would be rejected by us, and ascribed to the workings of a disordered mind; but seeing that it is part and parcel of His claims as a whole, it is evident that it stands or falls with the validity of that mass of evidence that goes to justify the belief that in Jesus we have to do with a divine being who became incarnate for us men and our salvation. Deny that Jesus was and is a divine being and it is utterly incredible that He will occupy the

judgment-seat in the last day. Admit that He was and is such an one, and there is nothing incredible in the thought that we as well as others will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ either to hear the words, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," or "Depart from me ye cursed into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels."

When we think of Jesus as the standard by which men are being judged, and more especially as the standard by which they will be judged in the last day, a question arises as to those who have never heard of Jesus. Up to the present, at least, the vast majority of the race has lived and died in ignorance of the historical Christ. How then can they be judged by this standard? Some have supposed that these will be judged by a different standard, and hence that Jesus will be the standard of judgment only for those who have known Him during their earthly lives. The Master himself said: "That servant, who knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be re-



quired: and to whom they commit much, of him shall they ask the more." (Luke xii:47, 48.) Yet while the language of Christ and His Apostles warrants the notion that every extenuating circumstance will be taken into consideration in that day, there is nothing in their teachings that even hints at a standard of judgment other than that which is embodied in Jesus himself.

Others have supposed that those who have remained in ignorance of Christ and the gospel in this life will be brought face to face with Him in the next life, preceding the final judgment. Such a supposition, however, is wholly without scriptural warrant. Everywhere we are taught that the final judgment is based on the deeds done in the body. Everywhere we are taught that the here determines the hereafter. Everywhere our attention is centered upon the present, and nowhere is there any hint that the judgment will proceed upon any other basis than the present life of man. As the late Principal Salmond said, in his well-known book, *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*: "Christ's own teachings give the significance of finality to the moral decisions of the present life. If there are possibilities of change, forgiveness, relaxation of penalty, or cessation of punishment in the future life, His words at

least do not reveal them. He never softens the awful responsibilities of this life even by the dim adumbration of such possibilities. His recorded sayings nowhere suggest the provision of ministries of grace, whether new or continued, in the after-existence. They nowhere speak of a place of repentance unto life in another world. They nowhere open the prospect of remedial discipline in the disembodied state, or of terminable award in the condition which follows the great day. They bring the two events, death and judgment, into relation, and give no disclosure of an intermediate state with untold potentialities of Divine love and human surrender. They never traverse the principle that this life is the scene of opportunity, and this world the theater of human fates'' (page 313).

In view of the fact that there is no hint of another standard as well as in view of the fact that we are everywhere taught that the moral decisions of this life are of final import, it is evident that those who die in ignorance of Christ will also be judged by that standard that is embodied in Jesus Christ and on the basis of the deeds done in the body.

When we think of Jesus as a Saviour as well as a Judge, a question arises as to the significance of the judgment for the saved. Some

have supposed that the judgment has significance only for the lost, that it has no significance for the saved. Do we not read in John's Gospel, "He that believeth on Him is not judged"? And do we not read in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"? And does not Paul in the same epistle exultantly exclaim, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect"? If God's judgment on the believer has already been pronounced in the act of justification, what further place is there for acquittal or condemnation as far as he is concerned? Unquestionably the final judgment will not have the same significance for the saved as for the unsaved; and yet it is equally unquestionable that all men, irrespective of whether they are among the saved or the unsaved, will be judged in that day according to the deeds done in the body. This is expressly taught, for instance, in II Cor. v: 9, 10, where the context makes clear that Paul was thinking of believers. "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto Him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the

things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

We are not to suppose, therefore, that the final judgment is without significance for us because we are believers, or that the principle of retribution embodied in the words, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life"—has no application to us because we are among those who have been justified through faith in Jesus Christ.

The most instructive passage in the New Testament in this connection is I Corinthians iii:11-15: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stone, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire." Underlying this passage is the thought of the Christian life as the

erection of a building the foundation of which has already been laid. With the laying of the foundation we ourselves have nothing to do. That is a work that was completed some nineteen hundred years ago. With the character of the building we erect on this foundation, however, we have a great deal to do. It is for us to say whether it will be built of that which may be likened to wood, hay and stubble; or that which may be likened to gold, silver and costly stone. The passage makes clear, moreover, that these lives of ours will one day be subjected to a test that will distinguish as unerringly between the good and the bad in them as fire is able to distinguish between what is built of wood, hay and stubble and what is built of gold, silver and costly stone. Also that the reward meted out to us in that day will be strictly in proportion to the good found in our lives.

This passage suggests, moreover, a twofold contrast. First, between those who build their lives on Jesus Christ and those who build them on a foundation other than Jesus Christ. Only the former will be saved, seeing that there is no salvation apart from Jesus, though, of course, some of the latter will be beaten with more stripes than others. Second, between two sorts

of Christians, between those who build on the true foundation a superstructure that is composed of what may be likened to gold, silver and costly stone, and those who build on this same foundation what may be likened to wood, hay, and stubble. Paul affirms that both shall be saved but not that the same future awaits both. Judgment will be for the one what fire is for the man whose house is built wholly of wood. He himself may escape, but of his house only the ashes remain behind. Judgment will be for the other what fire is for the man whose house is built wholly of stone. While his neighbors are mourning their loss his house remains intact. The one will barely be saved; the other will be granted an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Those who suppose that the final judgment has no significance for Christians suppose that all the saved will receive the same reward. Such is not the teaching of Scripture. There will not be a dead level of uniformity throughout heaven any more than there is a dead level of uniformity here. Are we not told that there are those who are greatest and those who are least in the Kingdom of God? Are we not told that as one star differeth from another star in glory so shall it be in the resurrection of the

dead? We are not to suppose that the thief who died on the cross will receive the same reward as Paul who spent his life in the service of his Master and of his fellow-men. There is such a thing as being saved and no more; and there is such a thing as entering heaven amid the plaudits of angel throngs. The point that I want to emphasize, however, is not so much the thought that there will be differences among the redeemed as that these differences will be determined by the deeds done in the body. It is indeed true that by the deeds of the flesh no one can be justified in His sight, and yet our position among the justified will be determined by the lives we live on earth. As Dr. Forrest says: "It is neither according to Scripture nor to moral instinct to depict the final judgment as implying that all in whom the same set of character exists receive an equal reward or penalty. It is strange how much the doctrine of a destiny proportionate to the measure of fidelity or failure, so perpetually on our Lord's lips, has become a 'lost theological principle.' It must be recovered, if we are to bring the fundamental conceptions of a final judgment and a final kingdom of righteousness into relation with the moral facts of life." (*Christ and History*, p. 367.)



I have pointed out the large place that the thought of judgment occupies in the teaching of Jesus. I have pointed out that He differs from others in this respect by virtue of the fact that He himself is both the Judge and the standard of Judgment. I have pointed out also that while He is Saviour as well as Judge, and while this modifies matters fundamentally, yet it does not alter the fact that all men must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ to be judged according to the deeds done in the body.

Before concluding permit me to remind you that because Jesus comes before us as Judge of the world it follows that He has an absolute significance for us and for all men. When Jesus claimed that the prophecies of the Old Testament found fulfillment in himself He made a tremendous claim, *viz.*: that all Old Testament history led up to and terminated upon himself: but great as was that claim it shrinks into insignificance as compared with the claim to be the Judge of the world, for this implies that the history of the world as a whole finds its goal in His own person. If Jesus had come before us as some lesser person we might suppose that while He has significance for some yet He does not have significance for all; or we might suppose that while



He has been the most significant of persons, yet the time may come when mankind will have so progressed that He will no longer have that significance that is now ascribed to Him. But seeing that it is Jesus who is to judge the world, there is no escape from the conclusion that He has an absolute significance not only for those who live, or who have lived, but also for all those who may live in the years to come. At the goal of human history stands the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. Hence no matter how much the race may progress it cannot progress beyond Him.

Again, because Jesus is the Judge of the world there must be a side to His character that corresponds to this function. He is sometimes so spoken of as to give the impression that He is so loving, so merciful, so tender-hearted, as to be indifferent to sin. Nothing could be less in accordance with the fact. It is true that in no one else do we find such tenderness toward the sinner, such a readiness to forgive those who repent of their wrong; but at the same time there is no one who is more severe toward sin, no one who is less willing to excuse those who continue in wrong-doing. It is written of Him, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity," and no representation of

Jesus that leaves His hatred of iniquity out of consideration conforms to reality. In other words, Jesus is conscientious, one who is quick to note the difference between good and evil, one who reacts favorably toward the one and unfavorably toward the other. If such was not the case He would not be fitted to act as Judge of the world; because whatever a person who is lacking in conscientiousness is fitted to do he is not fitted to act as judge. The mere fact, therefore, that Jesus is spoken of as Judge reminds us that His tenderness toward sinners must not be permitted to hide from us His severity against sin. We may be sure that the Judge of all the earth will do right. In order that He may do right it is necessary that He punish the wicked as well as reward the righteous.

Finally, it is only as we look at our lives in the light of their goal that we can realize their value as well as the significance of our choices from day to day. No doubt the thought of judgment is fitted to fill us with shame in our hours of sin and weakness, but at the same time it is an incentive to noble effort. Life is not a mean, obscure thing. It may be unnoticed of man but it is not unnoticed of God. Nothing in our lives is so insignificant as to escape Jesus. By that which we do from day to day

we are determining our eternal destinies. Do we realize this, we whose lives are marred by so many inconsistencies; we who are satisfied with mediocrity when we should be striving after perfection; we who have talents for service and yet permit them to lie unimproved; we who have wealth or power or influence but who use them to promote our own advantages rather than the good of our fellows or the cause of our Master? Let us see to it that we build on the one true foundation, Jesus Christ, but let us not forget that we are building for eternity as well as time. Let us see to it that we build into our lives that which can be likened to gold, silver and costly stone, that which will stand the test of Christ's judgment. Then we will be among those who will not be ashamed before Him at His coming, for we will be among those to whom He will say: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN: JESUS AND HIS PLACE IN THE COSMOS

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Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him and unto him; and he is before all things and in him all things consist.

—*Colossians i: 15-17.*

## XIV

### JESUS AND HIS PLACE IN THE COSMOS

**I**T is unquestionably true that many think too meanly of Jesus. It is clear to most of us that this is true in the case of the Unitarians, and all such as suppose that Jesus differs from them in degree but not in kind. It is also true, however, in large measure of many who so exalt the name of Jesus that they see in Him their Lord and Saviour. This finds its explanation in the fact that their attention is so centered on the relations that He sustains to men as to be more or less unmindful of the relations that He sustains to the universe as a whole.

It is, of course, true that the Scriptures throw the emphasis upon the relations that Jesus sustains to men—so that most frequent mention is made of Him as Master, Teacher, Example, Saviour, and such like—and yet they never suppose that His significance is confined within such limits as these. They constantly assume, even when they do not explicitly assert, that

He sustains relations to the universe as a whole, and hence that we do not think of Jesus as highly as we ought to think unless we think of Him in cosmical terms.

That such is the case is evident to every observant reader of the New Testament. In the prologue to John's Gospel we read, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." In the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians we read of Him "who existing in the form of God counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." While in Paul's epistle to the Colossians (i:15-17) we read of Him "who is



the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

Now these passages do not stand alone, though no doubt they are the ones in which the thought to which I am directing your attention finds fullest expression. But of themselves they warrant the notion that we cannot think too highly of Jesus, that in all probability our loftiest thoughts fail to do Him justice. We need but remind ourselves of some of the principal thoughts expressed in these passages to perceive how inadequate many of our thoughts concerning Jesus are. We are told that He is not a creature, *i. e.*, He is not indebted to another for His existence, that no matter how far we may go back into the past we will not find a time when He was not. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." We are told, moreover, that it is He who created this universe with all that it contains of things visible and invisible, and hence that not only the physical

universe with its myriad suns and stars but that all forms of personal life, including the most potent of angelic beings, whether they be called thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, as well as man, are indebted to Him for their existence. "All things have been created through Him." "Without Him was not anything made that was made." Still further we are told that "in Him all things consist or hold together," *i. e.*, He is immanent in the Universe to-day, upholding it by His power and preserving it in unity so that it remains a cosmos and does not become a chaos. Finally we are told that as all things, visible and invisible, had their source in Him so they move toward Him as their final goal. Not only were all things created "through Him," they were also created "unto Him," so that He is the last as well as the first, the end as well as the beginning.

Surely it is evident to all who derive their conception of Jesus from the New Testament that we think too meanly of Him when we think of Him as simply the Saviour of the world and the Lord and Life of humanity. No doubt those who see in Jesus the Saviour of men as well as their rightful Lord and King have laid hold on that which is most vital to them; and

yet it is by no means a matter of indifference whether we see in Jesus at the same time the creator, the sustainer, and the goal of the universe as a whole. In fact the more clearly we perceive how Jesus functions as Saviour and King, the more evident will it become that we would not be warranted in ascribing even these functions to Him, if He was not more than Saviour and King. In other words, back of our conviction that Jesus is Saviour and King there lies, expressed or unexpressed, the thought of these wider relations that He sustains to the universe as a whole. Deny these wider relations and only those who fail to think their convictions through would see in Jesus the Lord and Saviour of the world. That is to say, just as we would not be warranted in seeing in Jesus the Regenerator of character, if we did not see in Him more than a teacher and example; so we would not be warranted in seeing in Him our Lord and Saviour, if we did not see in Him the One who upholds and directs to its destined end the whole universe of created things. For how could we believe that Jesus is our Lord and Saviour, in the sense in which the New Testament teaches that He is such, unless we supposed that He sustains such rela-

tions to the Cosmos as a whole as the New Testament affirms?

There are various considerations which point to the need of our thinking of Jesus in cosmical terms, *i. e.*, as One who sustains vital relations not only to the human race but to the whole universe of created things, visible and invisible.

In the first place, our belief in the Incarnation presupposes that Jesus occupies such a place in the Cosmos. Christianity as the redemptive religion, it is needless to point out afresh, stands or falls with the reality of the Incarnation. Now when we think of the Incarnation, we do not simply think of the birth of a great man in whom the Divine dwelt as it dwells in no other, or even of the coming into this world of some mighty one who had previously existed in a state of much honor and power; we think rather of a great event in the eternal life of God, for that which became flesh and dwelt among us, according to Christian faith, was that same Word which, in the beginning, was with God and was God. Unless, therefore, we see in Jesus One whose rank in the scale of being places Him alongside of God and so One who occupies a place in the universe which is the same as that which God occupies, it is evident that we cannot believe in the Incarnation

as it is taught in the New Testament, for the thought most central to such an Incarnation is the thought that God himself in the person of His Son assumed the flesh of our humanity.

It follows, in the second place, that only on the assumption that Jesus occupies such a place in the cosmos are we warranted in assigning Him that place in religion that Christianity assigns Him. In the opening chapter of this book I pointed out that Christianity looks upon Jesus as the object of religion, and so as One whom we should worship and obey. If Christianity saw in Jesus simply a subject of religion there would be no occasion for our thinking of Him in cosmical terms: in fact there would be no occasion for our thinking of Him in terms other than those that we employ when thinking of any great man. It is evident, however, that we are not warranted in regarding Him as the object of religion unless it be true that He occupies a position in the universe that admits of our calling Him God, for otherwise we are rendering to a creature that homage and adoration that belongs to God only. In other words, our whole attitude as Christians toward Jesus has its roots in the conviction that He sustains relations not only to mankind but to the universe as a whole with all that it con-

tains, visible and invisible. That is to say, as intimated above, we are warranted in seeing in Jesus the Lord and Saviour of men only because we see in Him one who is infinitely more than the Lord and Saviour of men—because we see in Him one who is the Lord and Ruler of the universe as a whole and so One who can say with truth, “All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth.”

In the third place, that Jesus occupies such a place in the cosmos is the presupposition of Christianity’s claim to be the final and perfect religion. If we suppose that Jesus occupies some lesser place in the universe we would not, as has just been pointed out, be warranted in regarding Him as the object of religion. If, however, we see in Him simply a subject of religion, *i. e.*, simply the first Christian, we would have no assurance of the finality of the Christian religion. In that case it were conceivable that as Moses and the prophets were surpassed by Jesus so Jesus may be surpassed, and hence that Christianity is only possessed of temporary significance. Such a supposition, however, is inconceivable if we see in Jesus the object of religion, for in that case the universe contains nothing higher than He and hence the religion that centers in Him is necessarily the final and

absolute religion. This thought is common to the writers of the New Testament. It is in the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, that it finds fullest expression. The author argues that the Christian religion is the final and perfect religion because of the superiority of Jesus to all previous as well as all possible organs of revelation. If Jesus was but a creature it were conceivable that the religion He perfected should be still further perfected and so, in a sense, superseded by another and more perfect religion; but Jesus being what He is "the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His substance, the One also who made the worlds and who upholds all things by the word of His power," it is inconceivable that such should be the case.

In the fourth place, it is needful that we keep in mind the relations that Jesus sustains to the cosmos as a whole in order that we may rightly conceive the relations that exist between nature and grace; or to express it differently, between science and faith, between general revelation and special revelation. To perceive that Jesus is Creator and Sustainer as well as Saviour is to perceive that these have the same roots and hence that the relation existing between them is organic rather than me-



chanical. That is to say, grace has not been added to nature or special revelation to general revelation as house is added to house in the building of a city: rather grace has been added to nature and special revelation to general revelation as the scion from the good olive tree is added to the wild olive tree into which it is grafted. Just as the good olive tree presupposes the wild olive tree, so grace presupposes nature and special revelation general revelation. And just as the wild olive tree needs the graft from the good olive tree, so nature needs grace, and general revelation needs special revelation. If sin had not entered into this world we may believe that there would be no wild olive trees and hence no need of any such being grafted with a graft from a good olive tree, and so if sin had not entered this world there would have been no need for grace and special revelation. But sin having entered, grace and special revelation were needed if God's purposes concerning man were to be realized. Nature and grace, general revelation and special revelation, therefore, are not to be conceived of as independent, still less as antagonistic entities. They are related vitally and organically; and that they are thus related is grounded ultimately in the fact that Jesus is



the source and head both of the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace.

It follows that there can be no real contradiction between science and faith, *i. e.*, between what we learn from the study of nature and that which comes to us through special revelation, seeing that Jesus is the author of both. No doubt there may be a real contradiction between certain interpretations of nature and the contents of faith, and no doubt there may be a real contradiction between certain interpretations of the contents of faith and what is learned from the study of nature; but in view of the fact that Jesus is the author of both it is evident that, when both are rightly interpreted, there can be no contradiction between them. Those who perceive that Jesus is Creator as well as Saviour will not be in constant fear lest discoveries in science may disprove the contents of special revelation. They may be fearful lest men through false interpretations of nature be led to reject the contents of Christian faith, but they are certain that ultimately it will be clear to all that no contradiction exists between true science and true faith. Unquestionably, for instance, there is a contradiction between Materialism or Naturalism and Christian faith, but that is due, we believe, to the fact that

neither Materialism nor Naturalism is a correct interpretation of nature, and not to the fact that there is a contradiction between nature rightly interpreted and the teachings of Christ and His Apostles.

In the fifth place, it is needful for us to keep in mind these relations that Jesus sustains to the cosmos in order that we may be led to assume the proper attitude toward this world and its activities. If we think of Jesus exclusively as related to humanity, the tendency will be strong within us to suppose that He came into the world to save individuals out of the world rather than to save the world itself. In that case it is almost inevitable that we will underestimate the earthly spheres of art and science, of literature and politics, of domestic and social economy, and that we will join hands with those who say that "to be converted and then go forth to convert others" is practically the whole of Christian duty. No doubt it is better that we should neglect this world and its activities than that we should neglect Jesus and His gospel. Unquestionably if we had to choose between being mere secularists, mere worldlings, and being monks and nuns, it would be the part of wisdom to take our stand with the monks and nuns. "For the things which are seen are tem-

poral; but the things which are not seen are eternal." We are, however, under no necessity of making such a choice. This world is not evil in itself. Jesus himself created it. Moreover, His prayer for His disciples was not that they should be taken out of the world but that they should be kept from the evil in the world. Still further the object of Christ's saving work was not simply individuals, it was humanity itself together with the world humanity inhabits. Hence He contemplates the saving of the world itself, and His task will not have been fully done until "the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." With all its sin "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Hence our watchword as Christians should not be separation from the world but only from that which is evil in the world. We are indeed spoken of as pilgrims in this world, but we are pilgrims with many tasks to perform ere we leave it. Moreover, we are to remember that this world belongs to our Lord and Saviour and that it is our privilege to enjoy its blessings with thanksgiving. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are

Christ's and Christ is God's." (I Cor. iii: 21-23.)

There is need of emphasizing this thought, not because our age is over-ascetic—it is not—but because the notion prevails in some quarters that at heart Christianity is an ascetic religion and that it is only by a happy inconsistency that Christian men and women take an active interest in art, literature, business, science, politics and such like. Such a notion is wholly ungrounded and we may be sure will find no place in the thoughts of those who realize that Jesus is the Creator of the world as well as its Saviour. Such will find no fault with Harnack—however much they may differ with him in other respects—when he says: "If Christianity has no goal to set before this life; if it transfers everything to a Beyond; if it declares all earthly blessings to be valueless, and points exclusively to a world-shunning and contemplative life, it is an offense to all energetic, nay, ultimately, to all true natures; for such natures are certain that our faculties are given us to be employed, and that the earth is assigned to us to be cultivated and subdued." (*What is Christianity*, p. 80.)

And now finally, in view of all that has been said, it is evident not only that we cannot think

too highly of Jesus but that our confidence in Him is not misplaced. We may be sure that He will fulfill His promises and that it will be unto us as He has said. If He were some lesser person it were conceivable that His words should fail of realization, but being what He is it is inconceivable that such should be the case. In proportion as we share Paul's exalted conception of Jesus Christ in that proportion will we realize how fully warranted He was in saying, as he stood face to face with death, "I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

"Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it."



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CHAPTER FIFTEEN: JESUS AS  
THE COMING ONE

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This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.  
—*Acts i: 11.*

For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.

—*Titus ii: 11-14.*

But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

—*Mark xiii: 32.*



## XV

### JESUS AS THE COMING ONE

I AM going to speak to-day concerning a subject of which, in the nature of the case, we have no trustworthy information—unless it be that God has revealed unto us that among the events that lie in the future is the coming again of Jesus Christ. If then I were speaking to those who deny that the Bible contains a supernatural revelation, it would be necessary for me to prove that the Bible contains such a revelation, and that as such it is an authority concerning things to come, before I could hope to convince you that among the things to come is the coming again of Jesus Christ. Inasmuch, however, as I am speaking to those who accept the Bible as the word of God, and so as an authority concerning things to come no less than concerning things that have been, I am spared this necessity and need only seek to indicate what the Scriptures make known concerning this event.

I am well aware that much difference of opinion exists as to just what has been revealed concerning this event. It should be noted, however, that among those who accept the Bible as the word of God this difference of opinion commonly has to do with the events that are to precede or follow the return of our Lord rather than with the question whether Jesus is really coming again. The idea of Jesus as the Coming One is so clearly expressed in the Scriptures, is taught so explicitly and so repeatedly, that there is really no room for choice between denying that they contain an authoritative revelation from God and affirming that among the events to be looked for in the future is the coming again of Jesus Christ. While then it is impossible to discuss this subject without controverting opinions that are held by earnest Christians, we should at least remember that there is practically no dispute about the question whether Jesus will return. Those who are taught of the Scriptures, and who in their thinking go where the word of God goes, tell us with one voice that our attitude should ever be that of those who "look for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

No doubt there are those who confess belief

in the return of Jesus who attach but little practical significance to this item in their creed. In this, however, they differ much from those who wrote the New Testament. We find that they mention it considerably over three hundred times. Moreover, we find that they mention it as an integral part of the Christian scheme of things so that it is impossible to leave it out of consideration, or even place it in the background of our thoughts, and still hold to a Christian view of the future. Further we find that they advance the thought of our Lord's return as one of the chief incentives to watchfulness and fidelity and holy living. It is not only occasionally that they do this; they do it constantly. No motive is more frequently appealed to in the New Testament than the thought of our Lord's return. Certainly the New Testament is on the side of those who make much of the second coming.

Now it seems to me that before we can properly appreciate what the Scriptures teach concerning this subject, we must eliminate from our minds the notion that Jesus is to return to this earth to set up a visible kingdom and reign personally and corporeally. Associated with this notion is the idea that only the saints will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ

and that they will be associated with Him in what is called His millennial reign, since it is supposed that through this personal, corporeal reign of Christ and His saints the Jews will be converted, the forces of evil held in check and the so-called millennium ushered in.

I know that this view is quite widely held by earnest Christians; and yet it seems to me clear not only that it is without Scriptural warrant, but that it stands opposed both to what the Scriptures teach concerning the spirituality of Christ's kingdom and what they teach concerning the events that are to accompany the return of our Lord.

As far as this whole notion claims express Scriptural warrant it rests upon the opening verses of the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation. I am far from supposing that the mere fact that it rests on a single passage in so difficult a book as the book of Revelation constitutes good reason for rejecting it. If this passage really teaches a personal, corporeal reign of Christ and His saints on earth then we ought to look forward to such a reign, no matter how difficult we may find it to reconcile it with what the Scriptures teach elsewhere—in fact we must do so unless we are ready to confess that Scripture may contradict Scrip-

ture. But my conviction is that, when properly interpreted, this passage does not teach a personal and corporeal reign of Christ and His saints on earth preceding the final consummation.

It is beside my purpose to endeavor to expound in detail this difficult passage. I think the most probable interpretation is that it has to do with the condition of those who die in the Lord preceding the second coming; and hence that the thousand years of this passage is the intermediate period between the first and the second Advents looked at from the standpoint of the blessed dead. All I am concerned to do is to point out that at least it does not teach the notion of a millennial reign of Christ and His saints on earth—or, for that matter, an earthly millennium of any sort. That may be made plain by a single consideration. Those who participate in this reign are spoken of as mere “souls.” “And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God \* \* \* and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” That is to say, those who are here spoken of as living and reigning with Christ are spoken of as disembodied souls; and hence whatever be the meaning of this passage, it at

least does not mean that at His second coming Christ will establish a material kingdom over which He and His saints will reign corporeally.

Not only is this notion without Scriptural warrant; it is opposed by all that the Scriptures teach concerning the spirituality of Christ's kingdom. If the Scriptures taught that it was Christ's purpose to establish an external kingdom, with a central place of authority on earth like Jerusalem, then we might suppose in harmony with this that Christ is coming back to this world for the purpose of setting up this kingdom. But inasmuch as we are everywhere taught that He came to establish a spiritual kingdom—witness His own words, "My kingdom is not of this world," as well as Paul's words, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"—it would be hard indeed to save the Scriptures from the charge of self-contradiction if at the same time they taught that Christ is to return to set up and rule over a material kingdom.

It is equally evident that this notion is out of harmony with what the Scriptures teach concerning the events that are to accompany the second coming. The notion we are considering assumes that only the saints will be resurrected

and judged at the time of Christ's return. If, however, we leave out of consideration for the moment the passage in the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation—a passage that some mistakenly suppose, it seems to me, to teach the notion of two resurrections, the one of the righteous, the other of the wicked—we find that the Scriptures know only one resurrection and one judgment, and that this resurrection and judgment embraces the whole race irrespective of whether they have done good or ill. We find, moreover, that the Scriptures teach that this resurrection and judgment is to take place at the time of Christ's return. Still further we find that all three of these events, *i. e.*, the second coming, the general resurrection and the final judgment, are connected with the end of the present world-period and so with the time when Christ himself shall "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father." What the Scriptures teach, therefore, is not that Christ is to return to set up an earthly kingdom with Himself as King and with His Apostles and risen saints as governors and magistrates and such like; but that He is to return to raise the dead, to sit in judgment, to assign to men their eternal destinies.

I have endeavored to make clear not only that



the notion of millennial reign of Christ and His saints on earth preceding the final consummation is without Scriptural warrant, but that it stands opposed both to what the Scriptures teach concerning the spirituality of Christ's kingdom and what they teach concerning the purpose for which He is to return. I have done this, in the first place, because it seems to me that what prevents many from rightly understanding what the Scriptures teach concerning this whole subject is the fact that they approach them with the assumption that there is to be a millennial reign of Christ and His saints succeeding the return of our Lord. And, of course, as long as they do this, it is inevitable that it will influence their interpretation of all those passages that have to do with the future.

I have done this, in the second place, because I think that it is much to be regretted, from a practical point of view, that any should hold to the pre-millennial view of our Lord's return. The difference between those who accept and those who reject the pre-millennial view of Christ's return is no doubt comparatively small as compared with the difference between those who accept and those who reject the thought of His return. Moreover, I am glad to confess that among the advocates of Pre-millennialism



are to be found not only some profoundly spiritual men but some of our most earnest and effective Christian workers. At the same time I am far from thinking it a matter of no practical importance whether we accept or reject this view. In the first place, it seems to me that the pre-millennial view of Christ's return involves a wrong conception of what Christ expects to accomplish through the preaching of the Gospel in the present dispensation. According to this view the Gospel is preached in the present dispensation only as a "testimony" or "witness" to the world. It is not expected that through the preaching of the Gospel any permanent betterment of this world is to be brought about. This can be brought about only through the return of Christ and the visible reign of Him and His saints. Little more is to be accomplished through the preaching of the Gospel than the completion of the body of Christ, the filling up of the number of those who are to be associated with Him in His millennial reign. As a result Pre-millennialists are pessimistic in their judgment concerning this world as it now is. I do not merely mean that they think this world far from being what it ought to be, but that they think that it is constantly growing worse, that they despair of any

permanent progress by present methods, and that they believe that the only hope of the world lies in the personal advent of Christ. They have little or no appreciation of the benefits of civilization. It is only by being inconsistent that they can take any deep interest in social reform. The general tendency of the movement is in the direction of saying that the whole of duty is first to get converted ourselves and then go forth to convert others, in forgetfulness of the fact that Christ came to save this world itself and not simply individuals out of this world, and so in forgetfulness of the fact that the artist, the scientist, the philosopher, the educator and the statesman—the common citizen and day laborer also—have a God-ordained task to perform no less than the gospel-worker.

I now desire to indicate as briefly as possible what has been revealed concerning the great event that awaits us in the future. In the first place, as already said, it is clearly revealed that Jesus is coming again. Moreover, His coming is to be personal and visible. “This same Jesus who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven.” In the second place, as has already been indicated, at His return the present world order is to come to an end. This ap-

pears not only in view of explicit statements to this effect such as Peter's reference to Jesus as One "whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things" (Acts iii:21), but also in view of the fact that the return of our Lord is associated with the general resurrection and general judgment—events that are always connected with the end of the world. In the third place, it has been expressly revealed that the time of our Lord's return is "among the secret things that belong unto the Lord our God." "For of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son but the Father only," said Jesus himself preceding His resurrection, while succeeding that event He said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put within His own authority." (Acts i:7.) It is altogether certain, therefore, that those who presume to tell us when Christ is coming are speaking without knowledge.

At the same time we are told that certain events, such as the preaching of the Gospel among all nations (Matt. xxiv:14), the conversion of the Jews (Rom. xi:25-27), the overthrow of "every rulership and every authority and power" opposed to Christ (I Cor. xv:24), are to take place before the return of our Lord.

It seems clear, therefore, that while the time of our Lord's return is unknown, yet it still lies some distance in the future. Just how far in the future we have no means of knowing. No doubt, if events move as slowly in the future as in the past, the coming of our Lord lies far in the future. In view of the fact, however, that events move so much more swiftly than formerly, so that what formerly was accomplished in centuries is now accomplished in a few years, it is quite possible that the return of Christ lies in the comparatively near future. Whether it comes in the near or remote future as measured in the scale of human lives, we may be certain that it lies in the near future as measured in the scales of God according to whom a thousand years is as one day. In view of present conditions, however, there seems to be little or nothing in the Scriptures to warrant the notion that Jesus will return within the lifetime of the present generation.

In this connection it may be well to say a few words about the post-millennial view of our Lord's return, since it is evident that our expectations as to the time of our Lord's return are determined, in large measure, by the amount of truth we suppose to be embodied in this view. According to this view an earthly

Millennium preceding the return of our Lord is to be brought about through the operation of the same moral and spiritual agencies that are now at work in the world. Now so far as express Scriptural warrant is concerned, no more can be said in favor of a Millennium to be brought about in this way than can be said in favor of a Millennium to be brought about through the personal reign of Christ and His saints. Neither the word nor the idea expressed by the word occurs in the New Testament except in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation, and this passage, when rightly interpreted, as I have pointed out, has no bearing on the notion of an earthly Millennium either as preceding or succeeding the return of our Lord. As Kleiforth said, "The doctrine of a thousand-year kingdom has no foundation in the prophecies of the New Testament and is therefore not a dogma but merely a hypothesis lacking all Biblical ground." (*Christliche Eschatologie*, p. 188.)

But while the pre-millennial view is opposed to the teaching of Scripture as well as lacking in express Scriptural warrant, the post-millennial view, while lacking in express Scriptural warrant, is, in large measure at least, in harmony with the general teaching of Scripture.

Certainly on the basis of Scripture we are warranted in looking forward to a period relatively golden as compared with that which we now enjoy. Christ is to-day the Head of a Kingdom, of a kingdom that is not merely engaged in conflict with evil but that is triumphing over evil. We are to-day living in the midst of a period that is relatively golden as compared with the period in the midst of which the New Testament was written. Moreover, Christ is to go on conquering and to conquer until the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, until in fact the prayer He taught His disciples to pray shall have been realized. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."

No doubt many have supposed that Paul's language in II Thess. ii:1-10 implies that the Man of Sin will be exalting himself on the earth at the time of our Lord's return, and hence that the worst manifestations of evil are reserved for the period immediately preceding the second coming. A more careful reading of Paul's language, however, would have convinced them that while Paul says that the revelation of the Man of Sin would precede the coming of the Lord, yet that he does not say that the revelation of the Man of Sin is necessarily

to be looked for at the end of the present dispensation. In particular it should be noted that Paul's reference to the destruction of the Man of Sin is introduced not in the interest of chronology but for the ethical purpose of reminding his readers of the fate of this monster of iniquity; also that what he says concerning the destruction of the Man of Sin does not go beyond what he had said just before (II Thess. i:7-9) concerning the righteous judgment of God as manifested in the punishment of the then living generation in as far as it knew not God and obeyed not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. When we further note that in his description of the Man of Sin he apparently had a contemporary or nearly contemporary phenomenon in mind—in verse 7 he says, “The mystery of lawlessness doth already work”—it seems clear that there is nothing in Paul's language to prevent our supposing that the revelation of the Man of Sin is an event of the past. In all probability we are to identify him with the Roman emperors, with one or more of that line of human monsters who did not hesitate to set themselves forth as gods—most probably with Titus, who introduced his divinity and his idolatrous insignia into the temple of God, into the very Holy of Holies. But



whether we identify the Man of Sin with one or more of the Roman emperors—in which case the apostasy that Paul speaks of in verse 3 must be identified with the apostasy of the Jews—that Paul had such an apostasy in mind is evident from I Thess. ii:14-16—or whether we suppose that the Man of Sin is yet to appear, there is certainly nothing in Paul's language to necessitate our supposing that the Man of Sin will be exalting himself on the earth at the time of our Lord's return.

Again it has been hastily assumed by many that what is taught concerning the evils that would exist in the "latter times" or "last days" (Comp. I Tim. iv:1; II Tim. iii:1; II Peter iii:3; Jude 18) means that the days immediately preceding the end will be particularly bad. This, however, is to overlook the fact that these phrases as used in the New Testament refer to the whole dispensation of the Spirit, *i. e.*, to the whole period between the first and second advents. (Comp. Acts ii:17.) It is illegitimate, therefore, to say that the New Testament teaches that the times will wax worse and worse. Such statements do not necessarily refer to more than the first stages of "the latter times" or "last days." For aught that these statements imply, the closing stages of



this dispensation may be days in which evil will be completely subjugated. It is only because men have overlooked the technical sense in which these phrases are used in the New Testament that they have supposed that there is any contradiction between the passages in which they are found and such a passage as I Cor. xv:20-28, where the period in which we are living is spoken of as a period of advancing conquest on the part of Christ.

While then we ought not to call ourselves Post-millennialists, seeing that the idea of a Millennium in the sense of a thousand-year reign of unbroken peace and prosperity is foreign to the New Testament, yet this view is in essential harmony with what has been revealed concerning the future in as far as it teaches that Christ is to bring about at least a relatively golden period on earth through those same moral and spiritual agencies through which He now works—though nothing is said concerning the duration of this period. There are some considerations, such as the fact that Jesus ever points His disciples to a life of strife and oppression and persecution and promises them on earth not a crown but a cross, that seem to imply that evil will dog the footsteps of men until the end of time. None the less, in view of

the fact that there are passages that seem to imply that the kingdoms of this world are to become in reality the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ preceding the final consummation, it is probable that Jesus had only the early and middle stages and not the whole of the inter-adventual period in mind when He spoke such words. We may not be able to say on the basis of Scripture that an absolutely golden period lies before this world, preceding the final consummation of all things, but we can say that a relatively golden period lies before it—a period in which the will of Christ will be manifestly in the ascendant and that will at least approximate to an absolutely golden period. It is evident, therefore, that unless events move much more rapidly in the future than in the past, the return of our Lord measured in the scale of human lives lies in the comparatively remote future.

It is true that the expectations of the early Christians centered in the return of their Lord. It is true, even, that many of the early Christians expected to live to witness the return of Jesus. It is true, also, that one of the chief incentives to faithfulness and watchfulness and holy living advanced in the New Testament is the thought of our Lord's return. In view of

this it is maintained by some that we must suppose the return of our Lord to be imminent, close at hand, since otherwise neither this attitude of expectancy nor these exhortations to fidelity and holy living would be warranted.

It should be noted, however, that in as far as these considerations may be urged against what has been said of the time of Christ's return, they may be urged with equal force against the view that holds that He may return at any moment. To perceive how true this is we need only remember that the New Testament was written at least eighteen hundred years ago. If such language was warranted then, notwithstanding the fact that the Lord's return was at least eighteen hundred years in the future, surely it cannot be maintained that such language is unwarranted now, even though it be supposed that this event still lies some distance in the future. In other words, if such language does not prove—in view of the fact that eighteen hundred years have passed away without Jesus having returned—that the teaching of the New Testament has been falsified by events, then it is as difficult, even more difficult I would say, to reconcile it with the pre-millennial view of Christ's return than with the view I am advocating.

To say that these considerations weigh even more heavily against the pre-millennial view of Christ's return than against the one I am presenting is, of course, not to grapple with the difficulty that many find in these expectations and exhortations of the New Testament. No doubt there is a difficulty here, and yet when we keep all the facts of the case in mind, I am sure we will perceive not only that they are reconcilable with the notion that the New Testament is trustworthy in its teaching concerning this event but that it is perfectly legitimate for us to exhort one another to faithfulness and watchfulness and holy living in view of the coming again of Jesus Christ, even though we may not expect to live until it takes place.

In considering this difficulty, I want you to note that while the writers of the New Testament may have cherished the hope that Jesus would return within their own generation, yet they never teach that He would do so. Apparently they thought at times that all the events that were to intervene between the first and second advents might take place within the period of their own generation, but they never went so far as to say that such would be the case. They ever wrote as those who remembered the words of their Lord: "It is not for

you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority.”

I want you to note also, and this is important, that many comings of Christ are mentioned in the New Testament. For instance, the destruction of Jerusalem, the descent of the Holy Spirit, the removing of the disciples from earth to heaven at death, these and other events are spoken of as comings of Christ. These comings are looked upon as but precursors, as forerunners of the return of Christ at the end of time, and yet we should keep clearly before us the fact that no sharp distinction is drawn in the New Testament between these partial, preliminary comings and the final coming of our Lord. Possibly if we fix our attention exclusively upon the final return of our Lord it may prove difficult for us to find in the thought of the Lord's return a constant, every-day motive to obedience, unless we suppose that He may return at any moment. If, however, we keep in mind these partial, preliminary comings—comings that take place in every generation—we will perceive that while the goal of our hopes is the final coming, yet that Jesus is always coming and hence that it is ever proper for us to exhort one another in such words as these: “Be ye also ready, for in such an hour

as ye think not the Son of man cometh," and that irrespective of whether we think that the final coming of our Lord is in the near or the remote future.

But while we must keep these partial, preliminary comings in mind if we are adequately to appreciate the thought of the Lord's return as a constant incentive to duty; yet most of the expectations and exhortations of the New Testament find ample justification, on the one hand, in the fact that the early Christians were absolutely certain that Jesus would return and, on the other hand, in the fact that they believed that this event would be the culminating point in the destiny of every man. It is the thought of the Lord's return as *absolutely certain* rather than the thought of it as imminent that dominates the New Testament. Moreover, if we are to appreciate the emphasis that the New Testament places on this "Blessed Hope" we must remember that it is the hope not only of the saints on earth but also of all those who in the ages past have entered into their rest. It is the hope, therefore, of Abraham and Isaiah and Paul no less than of those of us who still labor on the earth. Hence, assuming that we die before the final return of our Lord, we will continue to long for it until it actually takes

place. That is to say, all the saints, whether they are in heaven or on earth, are looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. And the reason for this is to be found in the fact that the saints do not attain their full blessedness until the second Advent. Unquestionably the blessed dead are in a state of bliss as compared with what they experienced on earth: none the less "better things" are in store for them, and these better things will not be theirs until at His coming Jesus will give them their resurrection bodies and say unto them, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

I have pointed out, as best I could in the time at my disposal, what has been revealed concerning the return of our Lord. No doubt much has been left unrevealed. This, however, was only what was to have been expected in view of the ethical purpose of all prophecy. The purpose of prophecy is, indeed, to impart information; and yet the imparting of information is always subordinate to moral impression. Prophecy is, therefore, to be sharply distinguished from history and should never be defined as history written before-



hand. For whereas in history we have a right to expect details, in prophecy we have a right only to expect large outlooks, and these only in as far as they minister to right living. If we keep a firm grasp on this fact we will not be surprised that so little of detail has been revealed concerning the return of our Lord; and we will realize at the same time that if our study of this subject is to be profitable, we must ever approach it not as those who desire to satisfy their intellectual curiosity, but as those who desire to know their duty, the sort of lives they ought to live, in view of the fact that at some unknown time in the future Jesus Christ is to return to raise the dead, to sit in judgment, and solemnly to conclude the history of the world.









